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Almack

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ALMACK'S

A NOVEL.

“ Nothing extenuate, nor set down aught in malice.”

IN THREE VOLUMES.

SECOND EDITION.

VOL. II.

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1827.



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ALMACK'S REVISITED.

CHAPTER I.

SCARCELY had Herbert arrived in London ere he received a note from the Baroness, requesting him to go down to Beau-Regard where he no sooner made his appearance, than, to his great surprise, she at once entered upon the subject of Miss Manby, and communicated all she knew, interspersing her detail with her usual droll remarks, though she rather artfully omitted to mention the resolution Emily had avowed of refusing to assent to any proposal until the return of Sir Herbert. Added to this, Madame de Geigenklang drew a lively picture of the

anxiety Alfred had expressed that his cousin's wishes might be happily realized, and of the assurance he had given of using his utmost endeavours to assist him, by every means in his power, in obtaining his uncle's consent, which he thought, upon proper representation, would be a matter of the greatest facility. Upon Herbert's expressing his surprise that his cousin, as well as the Baroness herself, should have discovered his attachment for Emily, Madame de Geigenklang told him she had found it out long before he left England, and that probably Alfred had not been many weeks before he observed the same thing, but from motives of delicacy had most probably abstained from taking any notice of the subject, naturally expecting that if Herbert had any desire to make Alfred his confidant, the former would have seized an opportunity of opening his heart to him.

The Baroness then wound up her peroration by launching forth in Alfred's praise,—

who, to use the proper term, had completely "surprised her religion,"—and by then making Herbert sing through three or four of Rossini's newest operas. In short, it was late ere he arrived in London, where he was engaged to dine with an old schoolfellow celebrated for his cook, and who had invited Herbert to meet a party of young men, members of White's, where it was intended the whole party should adjourn after dinner to ballot for their host, who was an anxious candidate for a seat in the Bay Window. During his ride to London, Herbert reproached himself with having withheld his confidence from his cousin. Instead of any suspicions of Alfred's sincerity being awakened by what he had heard, his relation's conduct appeared still more delicate and amiable from his abstaining to make any allusions to the subject without being in some measure authorized by himself. It was now, however, too late to discuss the question ere he accompanied his mother to Milton,

their departure being fixed for the following morning. But Herbert resolved to take advantage of his cousin's arrival in the country, where he was to join them in a few days, to confide the whole business to him; and resolved to be guided, in a great measure, by his advice, both as to his present and future conduct.

In the mean time Herbert made up his mind to sound Lady Milton and to communicate to her his attachment for Emily, for which an admirable opportunity would occur during their long drive to Milton Park. On his part, Alfred shewed an equal determination to avoid every allusion to Miss Manby, unless an opening was fairly given, or his opinion solicited by his cousin. Indeed, had not Herbert been so positively informed by the Baroness of the discovery Alfred had made, it never would have entered his head that his cousin entertained the most distant suspicion of the real state of his feelings.

Alfred carried his tenacity so far, that he

not only abstained from alluding in the slightest degree to the name of Emily, but he mentioned those of several other persons, who he told Herbert were prepared to open the fire of their batteries upon him, immediately on his re-appearance next season. As they drove to dinner, Alfred mentioned, among others, the names of two or three ladies who had already consulted him on their chance of success, not directly, but by those artful means which well practised mothers in London know so well how to employ.

“There’s Lady Dossington,” said Alfred, “drilling her young ladies to fall upon you by platoons, Berty! and Lady Susan is to lead—”

“The forlorn hope,” answered Herbert, interrupting him.

“But she intends you to surrender by capitulation,” rejoined Alfred, “to save the effusion—”

“Not of her daughter’s blushes, certainly!” again interposed Herbert. “Come,” con-

tinued he, "for God's sake! do not talk to me longer about any thing half so disagreeable. I used to pay dearly enough for my Almack's tickets, by being now and then obliged to dance with the girls; but I must beg, in future, to retire from her list. I hate girls who are brought up as they are, and who put on two faces,—one for their mamma and papa, and the other for their partner; for they are no longer the same persons when abstracted from the side of the old woman. I detest that kind of deceit!"

"Well, then," rejoined Alfred, "there are the Miss Brambles. By-the-bye, I heard from the mamma, that you have been in constant correspondence with her during your absence; that looks like business, Berty?"

"She constantly plagued me to death with her letters," replied Herbert, "and I could not shake her off."

"How did you become so intimate?"

"Why the best is," rejoined the other, "I

never saw her thrice in my life! The first time I ever met her, was on board the packet between Dublin and Holyhead, when she introduced herself as a great friend of my mother's, and she said she knew her intimately."

"She dropped her glove once at a party," replied Alfred, "I naturally picked it up, and she then immediately struck up an acquaintance, and in three days after wrote to me to get her tickets for Almack's."

"Well, then," said Colonel Milton, "she afterwards introduced me to her daughters, who were really very fine young women."

"Who hunt for husbands as dogs hunt for truffles!" exclaimed Alfred.

"Not under ground, surely?" rejoined his cousin.

"No; but with the usual hope of their not long remaining above it; but where was the *padre* in the mean time?" demanded Alfred.

"Oh! his turn came last," responded Herbert, "he being then occupied in boring

the unfortunate captain with his endless questions. He is a perfect walking catechism !”

“ Worse still ! He is the drum to his own fife ; the echo to his own noise ; a composition of the scum and dregs, the roots and remnants, the top and bottom crusts of all the jokes he picks up at White’s or Brooks’s, or those he gleans from the Jester’s Vade-Mecum, which he reads every day for an hour or two before dinner.”

“ As, I remember,” replied Herbert, “ was the case with an old French ensign, who studied the ‘ *Almanach des Gourmands*,’ and used to occupy himself with writing out the *menu* for the most exquisite dinners, till at last his mind was so impressed with the phantoms of the dishes he had been studying, that in fact he every day mistook his *soup-maigre* and dish of *caravansas*, for a part of the *plats* which he had ordered in his imagination.”

“ But how came she to write to you ?” again demanded Alfred.

“Why,” replied Herbert, “I am almost at a loss to remember, but I think she commenced by requesting me to procure her some very scarce music, which, by-the-bye, she might have bought for half-a-crown at Boosey’s. I sent her what she wanted, and since that time she has cost me a fortune in postage.”

“That is what she calls keeping up a connexion,” observed Alfred; “I know half-a-dozen men who either have, or will have fortunes, with whom she endeavours in the same way to maintain a correspondence.”

“Oh, I am aware of that,” was Herbert’s reply; “Sidney told me she had regularly hunted him two seasons, till at last, to use his own words, he shyed, and refused his fence!”

“I’ll lay any wager,” said Alfred, “that she writes to your mother, offering to take Milton Park on her way to the north, east, or south, since all points of the compass are equally convenient when she wishes to saddle herself upon her friends, whose houses, of

course, are immediately situated close to the road she pretends to be travelling; and then, if once she sets her foot in your house, nothing will dislodge her until you declare there is not a single man left in the county."

"Nor then even,—so I have heard," added Herbert, "unless you pretend that your cook is ill and your claret exhausted."

"True, though even that will not do," retorted Alfred, "since old Bramble will then say, that he can manage very well for two or three days with port and a joint, until your cook and your cellar are recovered and replenished."

The dialogue between the young men was now interrupted by their arrival at the house of their host, situated in one of the most fashionable streets in the vicinity of Berkeley-square. This gentleman, Mr. Samuel Silvertton, or Sham Silvertoe, as he was familiarly called by his friends, was one of that smart race of young men who have only sprung into ostensible existence within the

last few years, before which period they had not attempted to gain a footing in the aristocratic vicinity of the squares, being then content with shewing themselves on a Sunday, and passing the rest of the week within the circle of the city walls. Sam was a junior partner in a banking-house,—one of those amphibious creatures who, after passing their days in the East, amidst bills, brokers, smoke, and discounts, generally make their appearance about half-past five amongst the belles, beaux, dust, and splendour of the West. Here they arrive in semi-military costume of young Guardsmen, and are more conspicuous even than those gentlemen for the smartness of their cabriolets, the fine action of their horses, and the stiffness of their own;—not to forget the quantity of under-waistcoats, the length of their spurs, and the apparently painful tightness of their black stocks. Sam yielded in nothing to his brotherhood; the splendour of whose small houses,—of course west of Bond and south of Oxford-street,—

the excellence of whose cooks, and the merit and variety of whose cellars, render them so great an acquisition to the fashionable part of the metropolis. To judge by their operaboxes; their hunters at Croydon or Salt-hill; their purchasing all the buhl, marqueterie, and carving at Baldock's; all the Dresden, Sevre, and enamels at Jarman's; all the ormoulu and bronzes at Fogg's; their bidding for all the best pictures at Christie's, and all the rare books at Evans's;—one has sufficient proof that theirs is the only career in which a man has any chance of enjoying the good things of this world, ere he is too old for any thing but Bath waters or Malvern air.

Sam was so far advanced in the science of fashionable accomplishment, as to make it a point to be always too late to receive visitors at his own house, and never in time when he dined out, unless, indeed, it chanced to be with some wealthy old hunks, whose dividends he was anxious to see figure in his own ledger. When the cousins arrived, he

was not, of course, apparently ready ; though in fact he had been dressed for some time when their carriage drew up at the door, and had retired from his drawing-room, where he had been occupied in making a little confusion, and preparing a few books and maps in his library for inspection, as if, in fact, he had himself been occupied in reading until the last moment. Herbert had therefore plenty of time to examine the abode of his old schoolfellow, who, at the period of the departure of the former, had not yet exchanged the humble form of an eastern chrysalis for the gay colours of a western butterfly. Colonel Milton had often dined with his friend when on duty at the Tower, which was contiguous to Sam's house in Cucumber-lane ; yet the latter rarely ventured to invite young men of fashion thither, as they all declared they could not go there without post-horses :—in fact, a great commotion was once created in his vicinity by two or three young men arriving at his house to dinner in

a postchaise-and-four, which was supposed by the speculators to be an express from abroad; the consequence was, that there were several bargains done in the funds upon the strength of the reports which were said to have been brought by them, and poor Sam had some difficulty to preserve himself from the imputation of an intended hoax on the money-market.

Silverton's present abode was a charming two windowed small house, well adapted for a bachelor, but fitted up with a degree of massy splendour better suited to a baronial castle. The first thing which struck the attention of Herbert was the vestibule, which, being about eight feet square, was converted into a sort of Gothic hall, the walls being grained and painted in imitation of oaken pannels, against which, in lieu of the usual conveniences for suspending hats, great-coats, and umbrellas, there glittered half-a-dozen helmets, as many cuirasses, and a collection of swords and daggers; whilst four or five

high-backed Gothic chairs stood against the sides, with all the uncomfortable formality of the days of King Clovis. The door which led to the interior was of painted glass, on which the arms of the Silvertons, their crest, motto, and achievements, were emblazoned, multiplied, turned, twisted, and repeated in fifty different ingenious methods. The shields which filled the angles, as well as the mullions and rosettes which crowned the architraves and cornices, were also emblazoned with the same proofs of hereditary virtue. The staircase, at the foot of which stood a very highly carved antique table, slabbed with marble, and supporting an immense buhl clock, was also painted and pannelled to correspond with the hall. Each landing-place was decorated with a profusion of fine specimens of Gibbon's inimitable serving, either forming garlands round a small collection of ancient daggers and pistols, or serving as frames to three pictures, destined to represent an equal number of Sam's ancestors: there being only two un-

fortunate circumstances in opposition to this conclusion; the one, from its being well known that Sam's father was the founder of his family, and the other from Sam himself having been seen in the act of bartering for these pictures with a broker near Soho, who wished to pass them off as the portraits of a Flemish burgo-master, his wife and son, *d'apres Vandyck*. The drawing-room, near the door of which stood a handsome marble pedestal, supporting a colossal bust of Napoleon, was somewhat more modern, but still intended to give an idea of a saloon in the luxurious age of Louis XIV. The walls were divided by gold figured mouldings into compartments of rose-coloured silk, representing various subjects from the Tales of Boccaccio, and were said to have once adorned the *boudoir* of the regent Orleans. The ceiling was decorated with a profusion of rich plaster mouldings of fruits and flowers, which in a room twenty times the size might have had a very happy effect; but here they overpowered the apartment, and appeared to

menace the pericraniums of the visitors. The curtains, and covers of the chairs, ottomans, and *fauteuils* were of the same costly material as the hangings, but of sky blue and silver, ornamented with figures of birds and flowers, of the most delicate workmanship and brilliant colours. The framework of the different-shaped chairs was of white and gold, and appeared intended for any other purpose than use; indeed, Sam appeared to be so well aware of this, that a few light straw-chairs were placed as *aides* to their more splendid kindred. These were, in truth, from Genoa; but Sam, whose ideas of straw manufactory were confined to his sister's hats, always called the attention of his visitors to his Leghorns. A splendid seven-branched Argand chandelier was suspended by a massive gold cord from the ceiling, and was, in itself, admirably adapted for the hall of Northumberland House; but here it was not only useless but dangerous, inasmuch as its proximity to the ceiling rendered its being lighted a matter

of impossibility without endangering the house and risking the neck of the proprietor as guilty of arson, whilst its approach towards the floor made it difficult for any person more than five feet four to walk beneath it, without the probability of being trepanned. The angles of the room were filled with some beautiful specimens of marqueterie and inlaid encoignures, supporting rich morsels of most costly Sevre, or bits of invaluable Dresden. Splendid buhl cabinets glittered in the recesses on either side the fire, whilst a beautiful *console*, inlaid with lapis-lazuli, porphyry, and varied coloured marbles occupied the space between the windows, and was strewn with filagree figures in gold and silver, vases of porcelain, snuff-boxes and enamels. A few rare books of engravings were thrown carelessly on a rose-wood table which stood in the centre of the room, the lower end of which was occupied by one or two beautiful Claudes and Correggios, reflected in the mirror over the chimney; in which the visiting cards and invita-

tions of Sam's aristocratic friends, an old Almack's voucher, and an invitation to dinner with the Lord Mayor, were conspicuously placed.

The inner room, fitted up as a small library, contained a rare collection of first editions, as well as Elzevirs, Alduses, and Variorum, which Sam, whose bibliological knowledge was pretty much confined to his own vernacular, had commissioned Mr. Evans to purchase for him by the foot. Here the tables and chairs were all of a description well suited to Mr. Silverton's taste for reading, but certainly not for that of a very studious man, it being morally impossible for one to seat himself on any of the latter, without falling asleep forthwith. Mahogany cases, filled with maps, supplied the place of cornices to the walls. Globes crowned the book-cases, together with marble busts of eminent men, upon the pedestals of which Sam had prudently directed some symbolic mark to be engraved, in order that he might not mistake Newton for Shak-

speare, or Sir Cloudesly Shovel for the Chancellor, when he acted as cicerone to his own rarities. The splendid tables, inlaid with brass, were loaded with buhl inkstands, seals, trays, and all the other paraphernalia of a correct writing-table. The chimney-piece sustained several rare specimens of bronze, divided by a curious antique clock, over which was suspended the picture of a very beautiful woman, mysteriously veiled by a green silk curtain. This was, in reality, the production of an eminent artist from the study of a Trastivirina; but Sam, when asked whom it was intended to represent, generally replied, with an attempt to blush, "Oh, pray do not ask me!" In short, nothing could present a more delightful picture of literary luxury than this apartment, where Sam always hurried to receive his visitors, though he rarely entered the room for any purpose but to place a book open on the stand, to make people believe that he really not only could but did read.

Several young men had now arrived, who

were in the first place annoyed at the idea of being themselves in time; and in the next, were highly indignant at their host's daring to be too late. Whilst poor Sam, who had long been ready, and had, as we have said, retired to his dressing-room when the first carriage arrived, was flattering himself that his dear friends were occupied in admiring the arrangement of his apartments, these gentlemen were amusing themselves in criticising both their host and his house in the most unmerciful manner.

“What an idea!” exclaimed one, “to fit up a sort of two-stalled hole of this kind, as if it were Lowther Castle!”

“Or Belvoir, *ça sent le parvenu*,” added another.

“I have no idea,” said a third, “of the impertinence of these city people not being in readiness to receive one at the door, when one comes to dine with them! if one does not keep them in order, if one permit oneself the slightest civility towards them,—they immedi-

ately become as familiar as if they were one of us."

"Oh! but of course he is not going to dine at home," said another seriously,—“that would indeed be the very climax of bad taste."

"If he does, I shall certainly black-ball him!" rejoined another.

"That I shall do, at all events," exclaimed two or three voices.

"Not after dining with him for the express purpose of balloting in his favour, surely?" said Herbert,—“that would scarcely be fair!"

"*Raison de plus* for his daring to corrupt us," rejoined Alfred: "if one were to admit all the people whom one is civil enough to dine with, White's would be worse than a jungle of tigers."

"Besides, the idea of letting in a sort of pawnbroker!" added another.

"A pawnbroker! who ever heard of one without balls?" exclaimed another; "ergo, I shall give him a black one most assuredly."

In short, more than half of the party had declared their resolve to reject poor Sam, who in the mean time felt himself so certain of admission through the interest of so many intimate friends, that he had already written two or three rather long notes, and had dated them by anticipation from White's.

At last he made his appearance, and was received by the generality of his guests in the sort of way in which a party at a tavern meets their host, when he enters the room without announcing dinner.

"How d'ye do?—So good of you to come! Dear me! I am afraid I'm rather late."

"Not in the least!" answered a voice maliciously.

"Well, that's very kind of you, my Lord," rejoined Sam; "but the fact is, I galloped into the country to get a little fresh air."

"Pray, ventilate yourself a little earlier in future, Silverton," replied the Peer; "the fact is, you ought not to go into the city when you have any body to dine with you, or else

dine before. Indeed, I did not think you were in town."

"Come! that's very good of you," answered Sam. "You are always so absurd! but you know I do not mind your jokes." Then he added, "That's a good bit, ain't it, Milton?" as he saw Herbert examining a Sevre vase; "it once belonged to Madame de Sevigné."

"Why, you told me it was Madame de Montespan's the other day!" answered Alfred.

"Egad! I believe I did," was the host's answer, "but I have so many of these rare things that I quite forget whether they were the property of people in the time of Charlemagne or King Clovis."

"King Cole, you mean," rejoined the nobleman who had spoken before, and who knew that Sam's father had amassed a considerable fortune by the sale of coals.

Samuel was preparing to make an answer, when fortunately he was for the present spared any farther raillery by dinner being

announced, and in a few minutes the party were seated in the dining-room.

It is but justice to Mr. Silverton to say, that whatever incongruity and disproportion he might have evinced up-stairs, here every thing was in the perfection of good cooking and good taste, if I except the mania of poor Sam for covering his walls with the portraits of dead worthies, who he swore were ancestors of his family, and which, more than one of his guests had told him, looked very much like eminent chimney-sweeps or coal-heavers in their black dresses.

If the various viands which emanated from the classic fingers of Silverton's artist were calculated to gratify the most *blazé* palate, the contents of his cellar were not less admirable for their variety and flavour; nor were the ornaments of his table less pleasing to the eye, though their profusion was in some measure detrimental to their effect. The most lovely Saxon damask was covered with the varied productions of Sevre vieing in beauty

with the richest Dresden, and the fantastic and classical genius of Lewis rivalled with the more solid and substantial taste of Rundell. Sam had adopted the foreign mode of serving up his dinner;—that is to say, not in the arrangement of his courses, but in directing all the different meats to be taken off the table, carved, and presented in regular succession; nor was he backward in his praises of a bill of fare which almost rivalled in length, variety, and novelty of baptism, the *carte* at Very's or the *Rocher de Cancale*.

After a dozen oysters had been presented to each of the guests, and a glass of very “curious” *Chably* administered as an accompaniment, the covers were taken off two splendid Sevre tureens of mazarine blue; the one containing a *purée de faisans à la petit Trianon*, and the other a *soupe sauté à la pastorelle*. To these succeeded a dish of red mullets, *à la ça ira*, and a magnificent turbot, which Sam's purveyor had carried off in triumph (for the moderate price of four guineas),

after a spirited contest with the *maîtres d'hôtel* of Lord Dossington and Sir Gore Cramwell. These were removed by a superb haunch, which recently belonged to a noble buck, who for more than four years had made his "midnight lair" in a celebrated Northamptonshire park; and a *bechamelle* of veal, ten weeks old, from an Essex farm. After this the different *entrées* were uncovered and exposed to view, and as the chased silver covers were removed there appeared, not an eternal round of "*potatoes papa*," but a *torse* of *Chevreuril mariné à la St. Hubert*, *des filets de chapon de Caen à l'Italienne*, a *fricassée de volaille aux ecrivisses à la douarière*, a *vol au vent de Cabilhou à la Dominicaine*, an *arliquinade de goles et merlins à la financière*, a *turban de lapereaux de Garenne à la Sublime Porte*, *des cotelettes d'agneau precoce aux petits pois tardifs*, *des rodomontades de Porceau au sauce tomate à la Bordoloise*, a *salmi de pérdicaux aux truffes à la Condé*, and a *gallimathias de becasse saux morelles à la Pompadour*.

The digestion of these most *recherché* dishes was aided by some of the finest sherry which had ever been compressed from the vines of Xeres; Madeira which was fully qualified for the Travellers' Club by having visited the East and West Indies; Hocheimer, Markbrunner, and Stein, whose bouquet perfumed the whole apartment; and Johannisberg which would have even vivified the apostolic palate of the Prince Vintner himself. The forces of the "Rhenish Confederation," as Sam facetiously christened the Hocks, were supported by detachments of Moselle and Bleichart, and bodies of light troops from Sauterne, Bourdeaux, and Hermitage; a rocket brigade from Champagne; a heavy battery from Chambretin, Volnay, and *Lachrymæ Christi*, and a *corps de reserve* of delicious Tokay, forty years old, with Malaga, Lafitte of the Comet, and Château Margot of 1814.

During the interregnum between the first and second course, the conversation of the party, which had hitherto been principally

confined to the discussion of the dishes, was now either devoted to the merits of the wine which flowed, as usual, during this interval with greater rapidity, or was directed by the different personages in attacking each other in that species of half-personal warfare, which is so fashionable among the most correct set of men in town. Nor did the host neglect this opportunity of giving way to his favourite topic, which consisted of praising every thing in his own possession; not an article,—potable, comestible, or ornamental,—escaped his laudatory remarks, and his greatest vanity was shewn by stating the prices which each article had cost him, and this he always did accompanied by his own regrets at his poverty preventing his purchasing a greater quantity, or exhibiting greater splendour in his taste.

“This Rudesheimer is fine,” observed one of the guests; “is it 1808?”

“I beg your pardon,” replied the host, “it is Johannisberg of 11, warranted. I paid seventeen shillings a bottle for it at Frank-

fort. Transport-duty and other expenses included, I may say you drink it at about twenty-seven shillings per bottle."

"I don't think it dear!" exclaimed another. "Have you much of it? I should like to get some uncommonly."

"Unfortunately," rejoined Silverton, "I merely purchased a few dozens; though it is not much money, yet we poor citizens must be economical."

"Where did you get this champagne?" demanded another. "It is rather too sweet."

"Sweet!" exclaimed the host; "it's some of the driest wine in London. It's extremely curious, I got six cases as a particular favour: the remainder of the parcel was purchased for the Emperor."

"I should have thought this had been destined for the same purpose," observed Alfred coolly; at the same time overturning a glass of Sauterne, upon which Sam particularly piqued himself, into the cooler at his side.

"It tastes much more like Imperial cer-

taine," added a young nobleman who sat next to him.

"Well then," said Silverton, "will you do me the pleasure, Lord Ernest, of taking a glass of this with me?"

"I'll drink one," rejoined his Lordship, "but I am not aware that one takes any thing but physic or leaps."

"That is to say, when your horse, or rather your friend's, does not take the latter without you," observed another of the party. Lord Ernest being much more famed for his precision, and his purism in conversation, than his skill in facing a brook or topping a wall fence.

"Then will you drink some Hermitage," rejoined the host, yielding to the lesson of the noble grammarian.

"One drinks porter, tea, and *tisane*," rejoined the imperturbable purist.

"Well then," answered Samuel, who dreaded lest he should be black-balled if he thwarted his guest, "will you have some of that by you?"

"Have!" responded the other, "one has the gout, the tooth-ache, or a run of ill-luck! I'll try the Chambretin, if you please?"

"Come, come!" exclaimed Alfred, "I thought you would have said one only tried a coat or a horse, but you stopped in time; you never attempt the latter now. The dealers say you rode a whole spring upon trial, but never purchased! Dyson would, 'I believe, as soon see the glanders walk into his stables as yourself.'"

"Talking of horses, Alfred, I know no one whose modest merits so justly qualify him as *premier ecuyer* to those of St. Marc; you would not require to be re-cast!" replied Lord Ernest, extremely satisfied with this repartee.

"Indeed," rejoined the other, "such an appointment would spoil all your pleasure if you went to Venice; for, being aware of your skill in equitation, I should certainly prevent your trying my steeds. I verily believe you would contrive even to throw them down."

"Apropos!" exclaimed Herbert, "so I

hear Lord Nettley has bought all Colonel Tilton's stud?"

"Poor Tilton!" rejoined another; "he is obliged to travel for his health."

"And I take it his complaint is incurable," observed a third.

"I thought he would have cured himself with bark?" rejoined Alfred.

"There is not a stick of timber left on his property," answered the other. "He was very hard hit last season. This year, I know, he was out more than thirty-five thousand at Watier's; and though he expected to land himself by the Ledger, owing to a bad book he is at least minus by the year fifty thousand; and I hear his attorney, who was his father's butler's son, was the highest bidder for the estate."

"It is true," demanded one of the party, "that Nettley is going to be married to Miss Longdale?"

"That depends on the weather," answered the former.

"The weather!" exclaimed Herbert; "what! does he make love and marry by the barometer?"

"Not exactly; but I would not give much for Fanny Longdale's chance, if it should happen to thaw within the next week. He would not stay in town for Venus herself if there was any chance of a fine scenting morning."

"What brought him up to town, then?" answered Alfred; "I thought he was still under the *haute surveillance* of mamma. She never allows him to move from her side, unless it is to hunt, with his tutor riding close to him."

"Indeed, I believe she selected Nettley's surveyor, not from his classic acquirements, or from his taking a first degree; but because he was indisputably the fastest parson across country she could hear of."

"Why, I confess," replied the other, "that my aunt did require, as a *sine qua non*, that the gentlemen who presented themselves for the important function of bear-leader to my

worthy cousin, should have regularly hunted two seasons at least, either with Sir Thomas or the Duke."

"But how does this matrimonial project agree with your cousin's engagements with the huntsman's daughter? Is there any truth in the report we heard in Oxfordshire?" demanded Sidney.

"Why, I believe," rejoined Lord Nettley's cousin, "there was some truth in his having been overheard saying tender things to Peg Rasper, in the boiling-house; and there is no knowing if she might not have been Lady Nettley by this time, had not the feeder, who is a discarded admirer of Peggy's, betrayed their intimacy and correspondence to my aunt."

"So to prevent accidents, or a *mesalliance*," said Alfred, "she has, I suppose, taken advantage of a hard frost, and his coming of age, to bring him up to see London, and if possible to induce him to marry Fanny Longdale."

“ I would have given any thing to have seen his letter,” exclaimed Herbert. “ It must have cost him some trouble to indite an epistle : for, from all I have heard, he is much better qualified to ride straight across country, than to write straight across a sheet of paper.”

“ Fortunately for the honour of the family,” rejoined Mr. Nettley, “ it was more easy for him to write, than for his Dulcinea to decipher, his composition—that being a part of her education which old Rasper luckily considered superfluous in a huntsman’s daughter.”

“ Well, then, how in Heaven’s name did they contrive to correspond ? Who was her amanuensis ?” demanded Herbert.

“ Why,” replied the other, “ poor Peggy, who found herself extremely perplexed, it appears, made a confidante of one of the housemaids ; who, being no blue stocking, called in to her assistance the whipper ; who, likewise not having the talent of Champellon, requested the aid *in hora mala* of the feeder ;

who, in his turn, being no scholar, but at the same time burning with jealousy, communicated the autograph to the steward;—and thus it came into my aunt's possession. I was called in to reason with Nettley; and if you wish to hear the epistle, I will read it, as I have a copy in my pocket-book."

"By all means, read, read!" exclaimed several voices.

Mr. Nettley then drew forth his book, and read as follows:—

"My dear Peg,

"As I rode by the kennel, I saw you a crying at the window, which vexed me as much as if my Bellingham mare had broken her knees. Never mind what they say in the servants' hall about the London vixen, for they're all on a wrong cast. I don't love a fine open scenting morning more than I do you, and I hate her as I do a hard frost. I use the whip you pointed for me every hunting-day, and I don't crack it, for fear I should

wear it out; so don't cry. If you'll front me a snaffle, I'll only just use it as a keepsake, when I ride to church. I couldn't see you last Sunday, for mother's maid's big bonnet: I'll snick the brim of it, if she serves me that trick again; so don't cry. Don't you care a bottle neither about what my black whipper tells you about mother's being angry with you for wearing a silk gown: I'll give you twenty, to spite 'em; so don't cry. Egod! I shall be of age next month, and then I'll let them know who's huntsman; and if Master Tollocks gives tongue again, I'll draft him, I will! I'll take up a link in his curb, as sure as he likes living in clover; and if that don't check him, why I'll just take off his saddle, and turn him loose on the common. What's the use of my being a lord, Peg, my dear! if I can't make who I love a lady? so don't you cry. It's all a proper fudge about my going to marry the thorough-bred thing up in town. No, no! they won't catch me there: she sha'n't have so much as a pat

of the hand from me. Mother must get up overnight if she thinks to bag me; and I'll break away, if they bring all the earth-stoppers in Oxfordshire to stop me: so don't be down-hearted. As you can't write, I suppose, and I don't get very quick across the fallow, meet me down at the Dingle-bridge, and I'll marry you when I come to my fortune, as sure as you have got hazel eyes; and I never cracked a nut this harvest without thinking of them. So don't cry; but love me as I love you, until we're in at the death: from your loving friend,

“NETTLEY.”

“I say, though, Peg, if you let the feeder come yelping to you in the airing ground, I'll just round his ears, that's all. It's no good my being a lord, if I can't keep poachers off: so don't cry.”

As soon as Mr. Nettley had concluded the perusal of this tender missive, which excited

the pity rather than the risibility of Herbert, the latter observed that it was much better expressed than he had been led to expect, either from the young nobleman's manners or conversation; "But," added he, "what could have induced your aunt, who has the reputation of being a very sensible woman, to bring up her son in such an extraordinary manner, among stableboys and gamekeepers?"

"Why," rejoined Mr. Nettley, "she had, I believe, heard that Lord Ernest and Alfred, and other depraved young men, were educated at a public school; so, to shield my cousin's morals from contamination, and to prevent his following their wicked ways, she resolved neither to send him to Eton nor Christchurch, but to educate him under her own eye, in the country, far from the vanities and corruptions of the world."

"So," exclaimed Lord Ernest, "in lieu of speaking Greek with an Ionic dialect, he can scarcely make himself intelligible in Gloucestershire *patois*; instead of whipping tops

at Eton with gentlemen's children, he has been whipping dogs, and spinning cock-chafers, with stableboys in a kennel ; instead——”

“ Granted, granted !” exclaimed Nettley, interrupting Lord Ernest ; “ but, after all, he is a good-hearted, kind creature ; and although the mistaken indulgence of my aunt, the accommodating blindness of his tutors, the adulation of servants, and the society of farmers, may have gone far to make him a complete Tony Lumpkin, yet it is to be hoped, that the future Lady Nettley will have influence enough to wean him from the low company in which he has hitherto passed his life, and restore him to that situation in society to which his rank and fortune entitle him. I assure you, I have done my best to co-operate in the reform.”

“ You had much better buy him a runaway horse or two, and let him break his neck out hunting, Charles,” exclaimed Alfred ; “ you would do more credit to your ancestors, and

more honour to the senate. Egad ! if the old worthies, whose portraits, in their Vandyke dresses and armour, adorn the oak gallery at Nettley, could look upon their present representative, I believe they would all, simultaneously, jump from their frames and smother him. What will you give me, Charles, to have him kidnapped and done away with ?”

“ I believe,” answered Nettley, “ that you are quite equal to perform what you propose. Egad !” added he, laughing, “ I would not give twopence for Fanny Longdale’s chance of becoming Countess of Nettley if you were in my situation : I ’d back your being my lord before she became my lady. Herbert,” continued he, still joking, “ I ’d have you look sharp, and bind him over to keep the peace ; he is a most desperate personage when ten thousand a-year are at stake !”

For a moment Alfred turned extremely pale, and remained silent : Nettley’s joke had struck much deeper than the latter could have imagined. Fortunately, however, Alfred was

relieved from the necessity of answering by his cousin himself; so he had time to recover his composure without any one remarking his vexation except Sidney, in whose mind doubts of Alfred's sincerity had long since arisen.

"I believe," replied Herbert, somewhat sharply, "that Alfred would do as you have done, Charles, had he the misfortune to have such an uncouth cub for a cousin;—but tell me, is it true that he refused to dine with the Longdales because he was engaged to sup with Mr. Cross, to see the wild beasts fed?"

"No," answered Nettley; "he said he had a prior engagement, to see the famous dog Billy kill two hundred rats, whilst his master ate half-a-score pounds of beefsteaks and drank three pots of porter. However, I am doing my best to make him more tractable: I have shewn him the Horse Bazaar, Tater-sall's, the mare with six legs, and the little Indian pony. And please Heaven the frost

lasts, we shall marry him before the moon's at the full."

"From what he told me this morning," said Sidney, "he will be off for the country the moment the weather breaks. He is as anxious to migrate back to Peggy, as a nightingale in a cage to return to its mate in the woods. If it thaws, I fear poor Fanny's chance of the coronet will be gone."

"Gone!" exclaimed Lord Ernest; "I wish she were, with all my heart; she has been going ever since the year one. Why, her mother proposed to me the first season after I left Christchurch. I was, however, obliged to be cruel. I had no inclination to marry the whole family; besides, I was aware that Mrs. Longdale attacked all the young men, as caterpillars devour the green leaves in spring."

"What," rejoined Sidney, "I suppose you wanted a trial, as usual, before you purchased?"

"I like his talking of cruelty!" added Her-

bert; "he never had an opportunity in his life of being cruel to any thing but hen pheasants, and upon them he has no mercy."

"I will venture to affirm, that I did not kill more hens last season than yourself, Alfred!"

"No, my good fellow," answered Alfred, "that was not more your fault than Joe Manton's; but, although you are the worst shot in Norfolk, if your brother's keepers had not luckily cried out 'Cock,' every time a bird rose, I believe you would not have left a hen on the estate."

Lord Ernest, who knew his weakness on this point, prudently made no reply.

The second course, during this time, was already in process of delivery. I shall not occupy the patience of my readers, or attempt "*leur faire venir l'eau à la bouche*," by describing the merits of the sauces and *coulis*, or the perfections of each dish;—suffice it to say, that the games were removed by *soufflets* as light as gossamer, and *fondus* with the fla-

your of ambrosia. Amongst the *entremets* were vegetables of the rarest kinds, from the *truffe au vin de Champagne*, and *cardon au beurre d'Anchois*, à la *Sefton* to the *cul d'artichaux à la Lyonnaise*. Amidst the *hors d'œuvres* there appeared *patées* from every department of France; sausages from Westphalia and Bologna; a superb *hure de sanglier*, attended by *Cavear*, *Boutarga*, and, in short, every rare comestible which the gastronomic genius of France could invent, or Messieurs Chevet or Morell Purvey.

“Your plan of serving your dinner,” said Herbert to his host, “is admirable; I wish it were more generally adopted:—surely, since we imitate our neighbours as much as possible in the concoction of their dishes, why should we not carry on our plagiarism to the mode of distribution?”

“Nothing can be more disgusting,” exclaimed another gentleman, “than to see a parcel of people cutting and slashing at the unfortunate *plats* which chance to be near

them; splashing the sauce into one lady's eye, and leg of a bird into another's lap."

"Yes; I was thinking of the dreadful misery of being placed opposite to two tough-boiled fowls, by way of a side dish," replied Lord Ernest, "with a blunt knife, and six or seven young girls asking for more wings!"

"Talking of boiled fowls," said Nettley, "what think you of my finding myself, the other day, at a dinner in Russel Square?"

"Russel what!" exclaimed three or four beaux;—"impossible!"

"True though, however," continued Charles; "and moreover with a huge *soi-disant* sucking pig placed close to me, as a side-dish in the second course."

"Did you call the man of the place out?" demanded Sidney; "or did you quit the vile cook-shop forthwith?"

"Really, Charles," added another, "if you frequent those kind of places, one must take the precaution of talking to you, as Pyramus and Thisbe did, through a hole in a wall!"

How can you permit such low persons to invite you?"

"They did not," quietly answered Nettley;
"I dropped in by accident."

"What sad misfortune, what *egarement de l'esprit humain*, could have carried you into the land of the Philistines?—you, who are such a perfect *Bursch*!"

"Why," replied Alfred, in answer to this query addressed to Charles, "Nettley's diffidence is so great that I had better relate the circumstance for him; which I am enabled to do from having witnessed, in a measure, its commencement and end."

"A glass of champagne, before you begin," said the host.

"Not with *fondue*, my good Sir," replied Alfred, "bring me the Volnay."

After drinking a part of the glass, with which he did not appear half so *extasié* as his host expected, who had accompanied the demand by saying, "Ah! do try the Volnay, it is capital; it cost me eight guineas a dozen!"

Alfred narrated Mr. Nettley's adventure nearly as follows:—

“As I was dressing one day in the summer, to dine with one of my constituents, who lived in the fields near Bloomsbury Square, and to whom I was obliged to sacrifice myself once during the season, Charles Nettley, who would receive no denial from the *valet-de-chambre*, walked into my dressing-room, declaring his intention of dining with me ‘I am sorry, Charles,’ said I, ‘but I dine out; my carriage is at the door.’ ‘Then order me a cutlet, a few truffles, an apricot tart, and a bottle of the light Bordeaux; and I will amuse myself until you return. We will then go down to Brooks’s together.’ ‘It’s rather unfortunate, my good fellow, but Mariné is gone to Cramwell’s, to assist his cook in making preparations for the *déjeuner* on Friday, and I have given permission to all the servants to go to Astley’s.’—‘Hem! where then are you going yourself.’—‘Into the city.’—‘Take me with you: your soap-boiler, or sugar-refiner,

or whatever he may be, will be enchanted to see me. Some marriage speculation, eh, Alfred?'—'*Nicht möglich mein Lieber!* In the first place, there is nothing hymeneal in my plans; and in the next, they are people with whom I neither choose to take any liberty myself, or permit them any pretext of familiarity with me.'—'Well, then,' rejoined Nettley, after a little consideration, 'I will drive with you. I do not feel hungry; and as I have not seen the new farce of the *Gastronome sans Argent*, your carriage can set me down at the play, and I will sup with you at Watier's afterwards.' To this I assented, and in a few minutes we were rattling down Oxford-street, as fast as my high-stepping roans could convey us. As we approached the vicinity of the plebeian squares, Nettley pulled the checkstring and requested the coachman to slacken his pace, during which time he carefully examined the windows on either side the street. As the vehicle entered Russel Square, or 'Parchment Park,' as Nettley had baptised

this handsome portion of the metropolis, he exclaimed, 'There, there! that will do. Pull up, coachman, at the house which is lighted:' where, in fact, a large party were seen, through the Venetian blinds, assembling in the dining-room. 'The drive has given me an appetite,' said he; 'there I shall dine; so, John, rap very loud, and announce me as Lord Nettley.'—'Do you know the people?' said I. '*Que Dieu m'en preserve!*' was the reply. 'Well, then, you cannot be serious in your intention of going in? Why, this is carrying your *sang-froid* too far: they will kick you out of the door, or throw you out of the window! You must be mad!'—'Never was more in my senses, or in better order to attack that turbot; look at the rogue how he blushes at the idea of our being acquainted! However, there is no time to lose, the door opens; so adieu! call for me as you return; and if you wish to see how jollily these good people live, come in—I will introduce you!' In spite of my remonstrances, he jumped from the carriage,

and in another second the door of the house closed upon him. I naturally concluded that Nettley would quickly be turned out of the house, and directed my coachman to wait at the angle of the square ; but there being no symptom of his appearance, I drove on, dined, and at eleven o'clock returned to ask if my friend was still there. The windows were open, and I saw the whole party, men and women, still in the drawing-room, and, to my astonishment, Charles Nettley at the top of the table doing the honours, while shouts of laughter echoed even into the street. In fact, when I sent in to say I was waiting, the whole party positively insisted not only upon his remaining, but upon my entering! Being disposed to witness the feats of Master Nettley, in I went, and found him in the act of finishing one of his extempore songs, which had been received with great applause. The individual, who was a candidate for the shrievalty, appeared as much delighted as a king on his birth-day with the panegyric of a Poet

Laureate. In short, it was with some difficulty that, in the course of two hours, we were able to tear ourselves from the good people,—men, women, and children accompanying us to the carriage, and insisting upon the Honourable Mr. Nettley's considering all their houses in future as his own; for this purpose his pockets were filled with their respective cards, while the exclamations of 'Wonderful Genius! a second Matthews! quite an Omer!'

"Odysee, of course!" said Nettley, interrupting him. "Yes, indeed, I flatter myself I never shall want a dinner east of Tottenham-court-road: next to the Bonassus, I am in higher estimation than any foreign production which those secluded people ever saw. Egad! I believe that they would have lent me a few hundreds on personal security, if I had sung them another round of compliments."

"But how did you contrive to establish yourself at first?" demanded one of the gen-

tlemen; "you must have looked like Daniel in the lions' den."

"Why, there was a good deal of gnashing of teeth and clattering of trenchers," replied Nettley; "but in I walked after the footman, who announced me as Lord Nettley; took possession, bowing, of a vacant place; unfolded a napkin; turned round to the she at the top of the table, and commenced by saying, 'I fear, Mrs. Crumpford, I am very late?' then starting from my seat—'Good God! I do not see Mrs. Crumpford!—where am I? what have I done? Lady Nettley's coachman has made a mistake, what shall I do?'—'Crumpford,' replied the man at the bottom of the table; 'God bless you, my Lord! he lives in Finsbury-square.' 'Heavens!' said I, 'what shall I do? The carriage is gone—I am so shocked—it must appear so strange!'—'Not a bit, not a bit, my Lord: if your Lordship will do us the honour of remaining here, and partaking of our pot-luck,' rejoined the same monster, whose name,

Jorrocks, I had read on a huge brass-plate on the door, 'we shall be much flattered.' 'Do, my Lord, pray!' exclaimed his wife. 'Mr. Joller,' continued the husband, 'make room there by Mrs. Jorrocks for my Lord. My Lord, pray do Mrs. Jorrocks the honour to sit by her? My dear, squeeze in a little into Mr. Hopkins!' In short, in five minutes more I had become extremely well at home with half the party, had devoured a plate of turtle, swallowed some iced punch, saw a turbot, smelt a haunch, and heard the pop of a bottle of champagne. In fact, by dint of old jokes, stale stories, a few songs, some imitations of actors, and a few other dinner-hunter's tricks, I succeeded in winning the heart of the whole party; nor was their admiration diminished by their discovering that I was not a real lord, but only next in tail. In short, when Alfred arrived, I believe they would rather have given a few hundreds than have parted with me."

"I never heard of such a *coup de main* in my life!" observed Lord Ernest.

"Rather say a *coup de bouche*; for I hate dining at my own expense as much as you do hunting at yours," Nettley answered.

Silverton, who had more than once expressed great impatience during the narration of this adventure, now hinted that it was nearly eleven. Coffee and its usual attendant of *chasse*, or *pousse*, as Lord Ernest persisted in calling it, quoting the Academy, Boiste, Cattel, and half-a-dozen more authorities, was now brought in, and the carriages being ordered, the whole party adjourned to St. James's-street, where Silverton was requested to wait a few minutes in his carriage until the ballot was over; and then some one would go down and introduce him in due form.

Ascending the stairs, and entering the large room immediately over that renowned bay window, so terrible to the minor beaux and pseudo fine men of London (and in

passing which, many a Guardsman, who had confronted without trembling the deadly breach, or awful charge, even felt his nerves somewhat agitated), the party found the implements for balloting already prepared.

On the large table, amidst Court Guides, Red Books, Peerages, and new publications, stood the two probationary boxes, their respective apertures wide opening their spacious jaws (as dark and dismal as the Mouth of Acheron itself), appeared yawning to devour the balls, which were destined in a few minutes to determine the fate of the two candidates. Immediately over each of these awe-inspiring caverns, on either side of which, "No" and "Yes" appeared smiling and frowning at each other, like the gates of Elysium and the portal of Pandemonium, was affixed a card, on which were inscribed the names of the aspirant, his proposer, and seconder, and to which, in most cases, the last line of Dante's inscription over the entrance of Hell might not irrelevantly have been

added. Most of the gentlemen immediately seated themselves to whist—three or four only remaining with their backs to the fire, and their arms under the skirts of their coats (that truly British attitude), waiting until the moment for fixing the destiny of their late host should arrive. No sooner had the clock announced the prescribed hour for balloting than the steward entered the apartment, attended by the principal waiter bearing a salver, on which was placed a glass vase containing sundry cork balls, of which one was presented to each of the individuals present. The steward having announced the names of the candidates to those who were too idle to examine the cards themselves, the balloting proceeded. The first gentleman, a young nobleman of high Tory politics, from having only one ball on the *nay* side, was permitted to enjoy another immediate trial; but upon the repetition of the scrutiny, this inimical ball not making its re-appearance, he was declared elected.

“Elected!” exclaimed Lord Ernest, grumbling; “that is very singular! hem!”

“Singular, indeed!” shouted two or three voices, laughing; “so you did not know your right hand from your left? Caught doing a good-natured thing in spite of your teeth!” All the party joined in the laugh against his Lordship, who retired into a corner of the room, inwardly vowing to revenge himself on the next victim.

It was now Mr. Silverton's turn to pass the ordeal; and upon his name being announced, together with that of Herbert as his seconder, and Lord Ernest as his proposer, the latter very coolly observed, “I felt it my duty to acquiesce in presenting this individual's name; but I beg leave to observe, that I do not at all concur in the prayer of the petitioner;—so, gentlemen, pray do not permit any feelings of delicacy towards me prevent your pelting him until he becomes as spotted as Lady Camarcl's Holy Alliance horses!”

“I would as soon trust to the mercy of King Ferdinand, if I were a Spanish exile, as have my name proposed by you at any club in London,” said Sidney very quietly to Lord Ernest; “more men have been black-balled from having your name attached to them, than would constitute a battalion.”

“My good Sir! I cannot help people asking me to propose them, but it is certainly in my power to act as I please at the ballot. It is extraordinary that men should delude themselves into an idea of my being bound to say *yea*, to every tiger who wishes to be admitted. It is their own affair if they solicit me to propose; it is mine, however, if I choose to punish them for their presumption: besides—”

“You wish to give them a trial, eh?” added Sidney, interrupting him.

“I wish I had been aware of the good-nature of your Lordship’s disposition,” said Herbert, “and I should have advised Silver-ton to choose not only some more popular

proposer, but some one more candid and fair than yourself."

"Do you mean to say," rejoined Lord Ernest, becoming extremely pale, and biting his lip, "that you cast any reflection on my honour, Sir?"

"Your Lordship," replied Herbert calmly, "must feel conscious of having deserved some reflection on your behaviour to the gentleman you have proposed, or you would not thus attempt to misinterpret my words or vote. Your Lordship is quite at leisure to attach whatever meaning you please to my expression:—I am not in the habit of retracting my remarks when once uttered, or of uttering them unguardedly."

"This must be settled elsewhere," said his Lordship, retiring to another part of the room, and calling to his side Colonel Molewurf, a man who, in disposition, character, and selfishness, was the very prototype of his friend, Lord Ernest; and, if possible, as much disliked in society as he was hated and

detested by the officers of his regiment; in which corps, his extreme unpopularity was felt even amidst the lowest ranks of the soldiers. In the mean time, the ballot was completed; and upon the drawers being opened, the steward declared "Mr. Silverton not elected;—eleven balls?"

"How many white?" demanded Herbert.

"Two, Sir," replied the steward.

"We are but twelve here," said Herbert aloud, "and there are thirteen balls. I desire this may be looked to: here has been some foul play. I do not feel inclined to make any quixotic interference," continued he, looking towards the corner where Lord Ernest and his friend had retired, "but I shall hold the person who has played this trick responsible to me, as I have seconded Mr. Silverton. After dining with a man for the express purpose of balloting for him, you, gentlemen, may settle it with your own consciences, if you think it fair to black-ball him:—but two black balls at a time is really carrying the joke too far!"

"We surrender, but do not fight; and as a very small share of your rebuke comes to me, Berty, when divided among so many, I beg you will consider me as a non-belligerent. *Au reste*," added the speaker, Lord Pironel, "I assure you, I did not black-ball him."

"Nor I," added Sidney.

The remaining gentlemen, excepting Lord Ernest and his friend, now avowed that they had certainly black-balled Silverton; but at once declared their indignation at the trick which had been played, which required an immediate explanation.

"But, Herbert," exclaimed one of the gentlemen from the whist-table, "you really do not mean to say that your friend Sam was in earnest? Surely he could not have had the assurance to imagine that he could get in? If I had known that, I certainly should have advised you to withdraw his name."

"If I could have divined what has occurred this evening," replied Herbert, "you may depend upon it, I should have recommended

him to have chosen a better proposer, and to have spared himself the trouble of a select dinner party ; which appears to have had the effect of merely making you all more unanimous in black-balling him !”

“ Oh ! but he can easily get into one of the houses in Pall Mall, either the Grand Junction Penitentiary or the Society for Foreigners in Distress !”

“ For the first,” exclaimed one of the beaux, “ he is fully qualified, being a very vulgar fellow ; but for the second, I do not believe that he is eligible, as I take it his travels never extended beyond Petty France.”

During this time, the steward approached Colonel Milton, and to the astonishment of the latter, very quietly avowed, that the head-waiter, having heard that a party was to dine at Mr. Silvertown's, for the purpose of bringing in that gentleman, and having likewise generally understood that the said Mr. Silvertown was an excessive tiger, whose admission would probably prove injurious to the club,

he (the waiter) fearing lest he should be elected, had himself slipped a black ball into the drawer!

This avowal, which naturally excited Herbert's indignation, had, however, the effect of merely calling forth shouts of laughter from the rest of the party; and he therefore contented himself with informing the steward that the matter must be reported to the committee; and then calling Alfred to him, he said, "Will you have the kindness, my dear Alfred, to inform Lord Ernest that I leave town early to-morrow morning; and that if he has any thing to communicate, it had better be done forthwith?"

Scarcely had he uttered these words ere Colonel Molewurf approached him, and said, "I beg a word with you, Colonel Milton, before you leave the room."

"As many as you please," rejoined Herbert, following Lord Ernest's friend into another apartment, and requesting Alfred to accompany him.

"This is really a most unpleasant affair," said Colonel Molewurf, as they entered the room, "and I fear—"

"Then your nerves are more easily affected than mine," rejoined Herbert; "but as I wish to relieve my friend Silverton as soon as possible from the anxiety which he must be in; and to spare his feelings as much as possible from hearing the manner in which he has been treated by his *friends*, I am anxious to be the first to communicate the intelligence to him:—therefore, pray be brief."

"My friend, Lord Ernest," replied the Colonel, "having placed his honour in my hands, I should prefer, Colonel Milton, if you would appoint a second person on your side, to discuss the subject with me, as I feel myself called upon to demand—"

"Demand nothing, in the first place, I beg," answered Herbert, interrupting him, "lest I should be under the necessity of refusing. In the next, it is quite superfluous for me to appoint a second person; I am the best judge

of what is due to myself; and if any explanation is necessary, I am the individual best qualified to explain my own expressions, or defend my own conduct."

"But, my dear Herbert," observed his cousin, "you know, in all matters of this serious nature, it is the custom to employ the mediation of a second, and surely you may safely trust your honour in my hands?"

"I doubt not your discretion in the least, Alfred," rejoined Colonel Milton, "but you must excuse me if I reject your mediation, and merely request you to bear witness to what may take place. If the matter is as serious as you imagine, it is the more urgent that I should decide for myself. Pray do not shut the door," continued Herbert, addressing Lord Ernest's envoy; "the words which appear to have given rise to the explanation you seek, were uttered publicly, and I therefore wish what may now pass between us to be no secret; so pray proceed!"

"Well then," rejoined Colonel Molewurf,

“I feel myself called upon to request you will state whether you made use of the term ‘dishonourable,’ as applicable to my friend Lord Ernest; secondly, that you will retract that offensive expression; and thirdly, that you will make such apology to Lord Ernest, as I may consider satisfactory to his Lordship’s honour:—if not, I do not see any means of avoiding the most unpleasant consequences; and I beg you will believe, Colonel Milton, that my object in requesting this explanation, which my friend’s character absolutely calls for, is with the view only of saving the effusion of blood.”

“I highly appreciate your humane motives,” half smiling, rejoined Herbert, “and can have no hesitation in replying at once to your questions.”

“I was convinced,” answered Colonel Molewurf, “that you would see the necessity of apologizing.”

“Pray, allow me to reply,” said Herbert, “before you draw any conclusions.”

“Certainly! nothing can be more just!” answered the other.

“To your first question then,” rejoined Herbert, “I shall reply by repeating my previous observation—had I been aware of the treatment Mr. Silverton has met with from Lord Ernest, I should certainly have recommended him to select a more candid and more fair proposer than his Lordship; and if Lord Ernest, or any other individual here present, considers his Lordship’s conduct in this business has been either just or fair to the gentleman he proposed, I will then confess that my ideas of justice and honour are erroneous. What, Sir!” continued Herbert, “propose a man, and then not only be the first to black-ball him, but actually put himself forward to excite others to the same act of ill-nature! If this be considered fair or generous, it is an entirely new interpretation of the code of honour. So much, Sir, for the first question.”

“Then,” rejoined the envoy, “I am to understand that you did not make use of the

term, 'dishonourable,' as applied to my friend, but merely expressed your dissatisfaction generally, relative to the system of proposers black-balling their candidate?"

"You have heard my answer as clearly as it was possible for me to communicate it to you," answered Herbert, "and I shall neither retract nor repeat a syllable. Secondly, I feel it due to myself to declare, once for all, that I will make no apology whatever; but that I must peremptorily demand one from his Lordship for having thus compromised me in this affair:" Herbert calmly added, "I am the last man in the world, Colonel Molewurf, to desire any thing unreasonable, or to refuse myself to any proper accommodation; but, in this matter, I feel that Lord Ernest has behaved with as little regard to my feelings as to those of my friend."

"But, my dear Herbert," exclaimed Alfred, "you cannot suppose Lord Ernest intended to offer you any offence. Egad!" added he, laughing, "I take it you are the last man in

the world he would feel inclined to draw his virgin sword upon!"

"Then," answered Herbert, "let his Lordship learn that his rank and position in life ought to make him more cautious how he commits himself with those who do not consider their honour, or that of their friends, as a mere plaything. However, Colonel Molewurf, you have heard my ultimatum. I must have his Lordship's apology before I leave this room, or you and Alfred will settle the hour of our meeting early to-morrow morning;—*early* it must be, as I have engaged to leave town at nine."

Herbert's coolness, the firmness of his replies, and, above all, the unexpected demand which he had made of an apology, so completely surprised Colonel Molewurf, that he was unable, for a minute or two, to make any reply. After a short pause, however, he said, "I will communicate your answer to my friend, and will use my endeavours to arrange this matter to your mutual satisfaction;—at

the same time, I can have no hesitation in saying that Lord Ernest never contemplated the idea of offering you the slightest offence; he cannot, therefore, apologize for what he must feel unconscious of having perpetrated, more especially as the whole thing on his side appears to have originated in a joke. I trust, therefore, Colonel Milton, that you will be content with his Lordship's avowal of his innocence of any offensive intentions, and that you will permit me to state to Lord Ernest that you did not make use of the word 'dishonourable:'—the matter will then be amicably arranged, and you will, I trust, meet as good friends as ever."

"Remember," said Herbert, as the Colonel was about to leave the room, "that I retract nothing! Construe my words in what sense you please, I will not screen myself under any subterfuge; and above all, Sir, that I shall expect an unequivocal answer to my demand."

After the lapse of a few minutes, passed in consultation with his principal, Colonel Mole-

wurf again returned, and stated that he was authorized by Lord Ernest to declare that he had no intention whatever to offer the slightest offence to Herbert; that had he been aware Colonel Milton had been so anxious for his friend's admittance, he (Lord Ernest) would have lent him all the assistance in his power, "Which, by-the-bye," added the Colonel, "would have been of little service, as there would have still remained eight black balls; and between ourselves, though Ernest is my most intimate friend, yet I confess he has not sufficient popularity to influence the vote of any member." Colonel Molewurf concluded by stating that Lord Ernest, on his part, felt satisfied.

"Easily enough, too," whispered Sidney to Alfred.

"*L'Honneur où Diâble est il allé se nicher,*" answered Alfred, "if he is content with such an explanation."

"He is a sneaking fellow," replied Sidney, "and I am delighted Herbert has given him

this lesson;—it will bring him down a little. Here he comes, like Adam being walked out of Paradise.”

“He looks much more like an insolvent receiving his *liceat migrare*.”

By this time Lord Ernest, attended by his friend, approached the group of gentlemen who had assembled round Herbert. Holding out his hand, and affecting an air of ease and indifference, he said, “I regret that you should have felt any annoyance at my adding my black ball to the collection prepared for your friend, as I assure you I had not the most distant idea of offending you; therefore, think no more of it, I pray!”

“And I,” replied Herbert, merely touching the extremity of the proffered hand, with an air of contempt rather than coolness, “equally regret that your Lordship, who is not usually wont to be facetious, should have chosen such a singular time as the month of November for playing a joke much more appropriate to the month of April.”

Lord Ernest and his friend then retired, amidst the smiles and shrugs of the other gentleman; and Herbert having quickly bade adieu to Sidney and Alfred, and arranged their speedy meeting at Milton Park, hurried down stairs to join Mr. Silverton, who had been waiting during the whole of the time in his carriage, anxiously expecting every moment to be sent for to take his place in the club.

“Bad news, my dear fellow!” exclaimed Herbert, as he seated himself by his friend’s side; “you may order the carriage to drive me home.”

“What! black-balled?” said Sam, with a look of incredulity; “impossible after such a dinner—it cannot be—all intimate friends, and all promising me their support.”

“Heaven preserve you from such friends!” said Herbert,—“that’s all!”

“How many balls?” demanded Sam.

“Only three,” replied his companion, permitting himself this little subterfuge, with the

kind motive of sparing Silverton's *amour propre*.

"Only three ! come, that is some consolation. Many members present ?"

"I've seen more."

"Some ill-natured fellows, I dare say, whom I did not ask to dinner ; egad ! it's very unfortunate ! Such a disgrace !"

"Disgrace, my good friend ! calm your apprehensions ; it is a matter of every day occurrence, and as much thought of in the world as a man having a fall in Leicestershire,—oftener the fault of the horse than the rider, as it is here that of the proposer rather than that of the candidate."

"But your name was attached to mine as second ?"

"And that was one of the very probable reasons for your rejection."

"But all my friends will look upon it as a public mark of disapprobation !"

"Your friends would be very wrong to judge so unfashionably. I tell you, it is a

mere trifle, a thing that occurs to the most respectable, the most popular men in London every night during the sitting of Parliament, at one or other of the Clubs."

"We look upon these matters very differently at the other end of the town, I assure you," rejoined Silverton; "there a circumstance of this kind would be considered as an indelible disgrace."

"I thought you had lived long enough amongst men of fashion," rejoined Herbert, "to know that they are, in general, the most heartless, selfish, unfeeling set of beings in the world, without a grain of kindness or consideration for any human creature but themselves. They care as little one for the other as a *croupier* at a gambling-house for the wretch whose last shilling he is scraping towards him with the fatal rake!"

"But I always imagined nothing could be more fair than the system of balloting?"

"So it ought to be; but, as matters are arranged now-a-days, nothing can be more un-

fair than the general mode of balloting. This being the case, men are utterly indifferent as far as their reputation is concerned, at their want of success."

"But surely I thought that no man was ever black-balled unless there was some serious objection to his character, his manners, or behaviour?"

"Why so it should be, one might imagine, but many are rejected because, not being known, they may perhaps turn out to be tigers or bores; others, because there is something vulgar and cacophonous in their names; others again, and the most, out of compliment to their proposer. Some are black-balled in order to make room for the friends of members who are lower down on the list of candidates, a few are discarded for their politics, and many for their dress; besides, there are a set of men at most clubs, who make it a regular practice of black-balling every individual who is proposed, and for this good-natured purpose they will put themselves to

any inconvenience, rather than that a man shall escape their malice ; thus, it often occurs that candidates are rejected in one month, without any earthly motive but the caprice of one of these black-balling *bourreaux*."

"Well," rejoined Silverton, "I am happy to hear you say there is no disgrace attached to the rejection, or I should have felt much hurt. I own, at the same time, I do feel excessively annoyed."

"Why, I confess, I should participate in your feelings," rejoined Herbert, "were I not aware of the nature of these matters ; as it is, do as hundreds of others have done,—have your name put down again and again, and in the end I have no doubt you will succeed. But, take my advice, choose a more popular proposer than either Lord Ernest or myself."

The carriage had now arrived ; after bidding Silverton good-night, and inviting him to Milton, Herbert took his leave, and quickly retired to his room, where in a short time he was quietly ruminating upon his pillow, on the prospects of his future union with Emily.

CHAPTER II.

BEFORE nine o'clock on the following morning Lady Milton and her son were already on their road to the country. Herbert had determined to take this opportunity of entering fully into the subject nearest his heart, and at once to make a candid avowal of his attachment for Miss Manby. To commence a subject of this delicate nature was a matter of some difficulty; and although he had made up his mind to the fullest confession, yet he had not courage to begin the conversation unless an opportunity should occur of introducing it casually. This restraint rendered him for some time silent; and it was not until they had proceeded some distance, that Lady Milton, who perceived his depression, was enabled to draw him from his reverie.

"Here, my dear," said her Ladyship, "are

a couple of letters which I have received within the two last days; they are both from friends of your's: the one, I think, will amuse you; the other is from my friend Mrs. Bramble, the mother of those nice girls."

"You do not mean to say, she has written to you already?"

"Indeed, she has; and, as you will see, proposes—"

"For me, I dare say!"

"No, not exactly, but offers to take Milton Park on her way to South Wales."

"Exactly as Alfred prognosticated!" replied Herbert; "and have you consented to receive them?"

"Certainly, my dear; how could I refuse? besides, I understood they were most particular friends of yours;—correspondents," added her Ladyship significantly.

"She forced her letters upon me, and I now and then replied to them as laconically as possible; but, I beg leave to say, they are no friends of mine, nor ever will be; indeed, I

shall not remain long at Milton if they are there. How long do they talk of staying?"

"Only a day," rejoined his mother.

"I am certain," answered the son, "that as long as your cook or I remain at home, you will not get rid of them; besides, if I must be hunted, if I am to be looked upon as a kind of butt for half-a-score of mothers to shoot at, for Heaven's sake! let it be for myself, and not for the fortune which they all imagine I must inherit at some future, God grant most distant, period!"

"Though you do yourself but mere justice, my dear child," rejoined Lady Milton, "I think you are unjust to Mrs. Bramble: she is a very good-natured woman, and appears to take the greatest interest in you."

"Yes, the interest she takes, or rather would take, is in my father's fortune; I am not the first person, by many, whom she has speculated upon,—but I can tell her that her case is hopeless."

"The girls are extremely good-humoured,

unaffected, and certainly," continued Lady Milton, "Margaret is beautiful, and—"

"Would make an admirable helpmate to the Colossus of Rhodes."

"You used," said Lady Milton, archly, "to admire tall persons;—I am glad your taste is altered."

"I am not so changeable as you imagine," answered Herbert, whose courage almost failed him at this hint from his mother; "but since I have been in Spain, my dislike to thick ankles is greater than ever; not to mention a foot as large as the marble model at Mr. Hope's, without its proportions, and a shoe which might serve for a pontoon;—I cannot bear the idea of a figure which owes its symmetry entirely to the exertions of the whalers, any more than I can a woman's mind whose *naïveté* and ingenuousness has been studied and practised, like the address-speech in the House of Commons."

"Well, I am extremely fond of Margaret," replied Lady Milton; "and as all people are

not so fastidious, as you are, I am surprised so handsome a creature has not yet been married!"

"Why," rejoined Herbert, "independent of the immense size of her ankles, and the diminutiveness of her fortune, no man likes to marry a whole family, which must inevitably be the case. For my part," continued he, "if I were obliged to choose one or the other, I should decidedly select the eldest sister, who is by far the most agreeable and well-informed. Moreover, she excites one's pity, since she is always treated as a kind of Cinderella. Bramble has fixed all his hopes of a rich son-in-law through the medium of Margaret, and he consequently shews his partiality in the most glaring manner. Indeed, both he and his wife evince so little delicacy in their preference for one daughter over the other, and say such sharp things to the poor girl, even before strangers, that I have frequently seen her burst into tears, and quit the room. Upon

my word, mother, if I were a marketable article, and if Sophy Bramble weighed about five stone less, and was about sixteen years younger, I declare I would try to fall in love with her, providing always, I was not to have the rest of the family at my house more than six months out of the twelve. But, between ourselves, there would be a fatal objection in the wig and false teeth."

"I declare, my dear," rejoined Lady Milton, "you are become as scandalous as an old maiden of fifty ;—so, to prevent your farther pulling them to pieces, read that letter."

Herbert took the epistle from his mother's hand, and read as follows :—

"Bramble Grove, November 18.

"MY DEAR LADY MILTON,—Our delight at the gratifying intelligence conveyed to us this morning, of the safe return of Colonel Milton to England, must excuse my hastening to offer you our sincere and heartfelt congratulations at an event so interesting to all

those who have the pleasure of being acquainted with your gallant son. The girls are so overjoyed at the return of the Achilles, for so Margaret calls him——”

“Phu!” exclaimed Herbert to his mother, “I will read no more of the vile balderdash.”

“Then I will read it to you, my dear,” answered Lady Milton; and taking the letter, she proceeded——“‘that they will not permit me to rest until I convey to you their compliments on this happy occasion. Indeed, I think the welcome intelligence has had the effect of diminishing Margaret’s cough, and she has certainly been in better health the last two days than I have seen her for some time,—the best physician, after all, I believe is happiness, and the prospect of being with those we love!’”

“I think that looks something like making a proposal!” exclaimed Herbert. “It’s the most barefaced thing I ever heard. I wonder, my dear mother, that you have patience to read it!”

“ My patience,” rejoined Lady Milton, “ can never be exhausted when your praise is the subject.” And she then continued—
“ ‘ We are about to quit this place on a tour for a few weeks, having at length yielded to the pressing invitations of some of our friends. We intend, therefore, tearing ourselves from home for a short time, as we are really afraid of offending so many people by our constant refusal to avail ourselves of their pressing invitations. Mr. Bramble is never so happy as when he is at his own fireside, and although he is always delighted to see his friends here, yet he dislikes visiting beyond measure ; and Margaret is so attached to the lodge, so much occupied with improving herself in drawing, music, the Belles-Lettres, and languages, that it is a matter of great difficulty to persuade her to quit her household gods, even for a few weeks during the Almack’s season, she is so domestic. The only thing which consoles her at the idea of leaving home, is the hope of meeting you and Colonel

Milton on our tour. We are going to Glynn Castle——”

“Not whilst I am there,” exclaimed Herbert, “I hope! or I shall renounce my visit. I do not wish to be rude to Mrs. Bramble; but it would be ridiculous coquetry in me, if I affected to misunderstand her views. But what does she say about going to Milton?”

“Do not interrupt me, and you will hear. Let me see—‘Glynn Castle’—Oh! here it is.—‘And although it will be a slight *detour* through Devonshire, we will, if you can make it convenient to receive us for a night or two, diverge from our road; the idea of passing within twenty or thirty miles without seeing you all would make us quite unhappy. For this purpose we must, it is true, curtail our visit at the Kirby’s, though I fear they will never forgive us for cheating them of a minute of the long visit which they have insisted upon our paying them—they are so fond of Margaret. We suppose Colonel Milton will be with you. Adieu, dear Lady Milton;

accept once more the congratulations which we all unite in offering. Pray convey Margaret's kindest regards to the Hero of the Tagus, as she calls him. Ever your's sincerely,

“‘ MARGARET BRAMBLE.

“‘ P.S. There is no truth whatever in the report of Margaret's going to be married to Sir Peter Sluice—his being blind, and having lost the use of his right side, are insuperable objections; so pray contradict it, you have my authority. His fortune is, I believe, nominally large, but almost entirely swallowed up by mortgages: besides, as Margaret says, it would really be very shocking to perpetuate the sad defect of the Baronet. Mr. Bramble says he never will consent to his grand-children coming into the world like little puppies, whatever they may turn out afterwards. Apropos of dogs—do tell Colonel Milton to embrace his brave animal for us, Salvator Rosa, as Margaret calls him. I hear the hat you wore at the last Almack's

was perfect, did you get it from Paris? *Rue Vivienne*, we conclude. Margaret thinks Spanish a beautiful language—*Maestosa*, as she calls it. She hopes Colonel Milton will give her a lesson or two,—his accent must be perfect.’ ”

“ I never heard such a tissue of humbug and impudence ; and as for Miss Margaret’s foresight in the postscript, it is exactly the species of *naïveté* I should have expected. Then again their attachment to the Grove is mere nonsense. Why, old Bramble is too happy to seize any excuse to run away from it ; and whilst Margaret is counting the hours which detain them there, her mother is counting the eggs and bottles of hot port they devour during their stay : and as for Miss’s music and drawing, why there is one eternal song which she always squeaks, and one never-ending drawing (purchased, no doubt), which she perpetually shews. In short, my dear mother, I will fly from them to a cer-

tainty, if they remain more than a couple of days."

"Well, my dear Herbert, think no more about them; but read this,—it is from your old friend, Claudia Babington."

"What, good old aunt Claudia!" exclaimed Herbert, with pleasure; "I loved the good old woman with all my heart, and, at all events, in her one can meet with no deceit, or underhand intentions."

"Why, to say the truth," rejoined Lady Milton, "aunt Claudia imagined you were once in love with her niece, Arabella; and if I were not aware that the good old soul is incapable of malice, and really thinks that you have suffered an irreparable loss in not marrying your old flirt, I should have imagined her letter had been written to pique you, as it announces Arabella's union with Mr. Scratchley."

"I marry her! Why she is at least ten years older than I am, and I should as soon have thought of marrying my aunt Claudia

herself: though I believe I did behave ill to her, for when I grew too tall to swallow sugar-plums and sit on her knee, I did not pay her so much attention as I used to do when I ransacked her work-boxes for kisses; though, I declare, I should as soon have dreamed of beating her as of robbing her cheek of one. I never could bear her red nose; it always appeared to be blushing for the paleness of the face on which it was destined to flourish. But now for aunt Claudia—

“Eglantine Lodge, Nov. 4, 18—.

“‘MY RESPECTED FRIEND—With an overflowing heart still palpitating with past pleasures—with a hand still trembling from the contact of the hymeneal touch—with a voice still quivering from the last adieu—with eyes still humid from the emotion of the solemn and awe-inspiring ceremony of yesterday—with cheeks still tingling from the effusions of the chaste embrace imprinted on either side by the dear duet—I take up my

pen, and must, my dear and ever valued Lady Milton, implore your charitable indulgence for any faults and confusion which may appear in this brief detail of the interesting event which we regretted, for ourselves only, that you were precluded from witnessing, by your particularly, like yourself, highly meritorious devotion to the delightful solitudes of maternal love.'—

“Ah!” said Herbert, drawing his breath, “I see the old lady’s sentences are not a jot shorter than usual; in full proportion to the length of her crossed and recrossed epistle: but let us proceed.”—

“‘I should strongly recommend your dear son (who once, my good friend, I had hoped, might have been the means of uniting us more closely, but this happiness was destined for another) to apply some of the embrocation No. 1, or the liniment No. 2, of which I enclose receipts, if ever he find any irritation in his head, or any tingling arising from his wounds: I have tried both, with eminent

success, on the forehead and arm of my dear brother's ploughboy, who, generally well-conducted, has his share of faults, and who, in an unfortunate broil with that warm-spirited creature, Jane Batter the cook, received rather a violent chop on the left temple, from a blow with the pepper-box: Jane, who was serving in the kitchen, having actually caught him carrying off a slice of corned beef, under the pretext of lighting a stable lantern.'—

“I wonder if old Claudia be aware of her puns?” said Herbert.

“Certainly not, my dear; she would be as much surprised at the idea of having committed a joke, as the *bourgeois gentilhomme* was at the idea of having spoken prose all his life;—but go on.”

“‘But to return to the interesting circumstance which has for ever sealed, with the assistance of Divine Providence, the happiness of our dearly beloved Arabella. The morning of Thursday, the day fixed upon for this soul-inspiring ceremony, was ushered in by the

inging of the bells of the circumjacent parish churches, even as the preceding evening had been brought to a close by the same delightful pastoral sounds : My dear brother, with his usual liberality, having directed twelve quarts of excellent mixed beer to be distributed amongst the eighteen ringers, all of them young men of most unexceptionable moral character, and one of whom, indeed, Elijah Groom, educated at our village-school, will, I have no doubt, in due time, if he goes on well, succeed the old clerk, Nathaniel Broach, in his most sacred and interesting functions ; in short, my good brother says, that if Elijah overcomes the slight hesitation in his speech, and the difficulty he finds in pronouncing the consonants, he has no doubt he will read full as well as our, at present, very highly to be respected Nathaniel, whose loss to the parish would indeed be most irreparable ; though I have the vanity to think, if he strictly follows my prescription, takes the powders in the morning, and the draughts at

night, entirely abstaining from small-beer, and other inflammatory liquids, I have no doubt may, with the blessing of God, be yet spared for many years.

“ ‘ Well, my dear friend, ere the merry ding-dong of the bells had announced the auspicious day, or awakened the villagers from their rustic slumbers, already every individual in this happy abode was on foot. My first impulse, after saying my prayers, and just looking again over the marriage ceremony, was to enter the chamber of our dear Arabella, whom I found trying on the bobbing-net highly-figured veil, which our excellent friend, my then about-to-be sister-in-law, presented to her for the holy purpose. She blushed exceedingly when I entered; I kissed her, dear girl, and then looking out of the window, ascertained the state of the weather, which, for this brumal season, was indeed wonderfully serene and sunshiny. Indeed, it seemed as if summer had again made an effort to return to earth—in fact, it was so remark-

ably fine, as to attract the attention of our dear child's future, who most wittily observed, as I poured out his Souchong and Bohea mixed (which is certainly more wholesome than Souchong alone), at breakfast, 'Aunt Claudia,' said the dear fellow, 'I am not much inclined to believe in apparitions; but, in troth, do you know, I think the ghost of last summer is come to honour our bridal day.' You may conceive, my dear Lady Milton, how beautifully our sweet girl blushed at this sally of her beloved intended; the compliment was so neatly turned.—

"The good old woman's innocence appears to be as great as ever," observed Herbert, "though I never read such an interminable chain of twaddle, yet one sees the goodness of the old lady's heart in every line."—

"The ingenuous confusion of our dear niece was also somewhat augmented by that droll man, our esteemed cousin, Sippets, who exclaimed, 'Nor I, indeed, did ne'er give credit to the re-appearance of the whole, or

particularly parts, of departed bodies; but there,' said he, 'there sits the ghost of Banquo.'

"I declare, my estimable friend, that I am not superstitious. I started, not indeed understanding the wit of this repartee, till my dear, about-to-be nephew, Theodore Scratchley whispered in my ear, 'He means Mr. Cowsfoot, who is the only remaining partner in the late Islington Bank.'

"I had no doubt that the rest of these gentlemen fell into a premature grave from wet feet, and neglecting the use of flannels; but cousin Sippets assured me that they were carried off in consequence of great irregularities, and too long a run, which ended in a stoppage. For God's sake, my dear! do recommend your worthy and about-to-return husband, to use worsted stockings and fleecy hosiery in general, and pray entreat your brave son not to take too much exercise, or it will end in indigestion, as was the case with poor Mr. Cowsfoot's partners.'—

“I am very much obliged to the good old woman for her solicitude about me,” exclaimed Herbert; “her mistake is excellent;—but what comes next?”—

“Well, my dear Lady Milton, as soon as our breakfast was brought to a conclusion—nothing, by-the-bye, could exceed the vastly appropriate neatness of this repast, which was confined to immediate then, or afterwards-to-be relations, we retired to prepare ourselves. I shall not enumerate to you all the various things on the sideboard or table, which really creaked under the weight of rolls and cold viands; the former of which that ingenious creature, Batter, had formed in every possible shape, out of compliment to the day. Fingers, balls, hearts, arrows, hands-joined; indeed, under my direction, and from the receipt I got from your esteemed housekeeper, Mrs. Martin, to whom I beg you will give my remembrance, and tell her whenever she feels a return of the pain she mentioned, to use the cinnamon-water with ten drops of the extract

of rosemary. Well, Jane made from this receipt a large true lover's knot, admirably natural, and which my dear brother's footman, Joseph—you must remember Joseph—with a degree of politeness and good-breeding beyond his station in life, but perfectly in unison with the general propriety of his behaviour,—he is an immense favourite with all the elderly maid-servants,—placed on the napkin of the darling soon about-to-be-bride. You may conceive how dreadfully the sweet girl was agitated as she unrolled her napkin, and how crimson red she blushed at this discovery—‘this snake in the grass,’ as that ludicrous creature, our cousin Sippets, called it. Indeed, she appeared so much agitated, that I regretted much having lent myself to this practical joke.

“ ‘ I forgot to mention that we used the tea and breakfast necessities which my dear brother bought at Wedgwood's, and the urn (plated) which you, my kind friend, presented to my late never-to-be-forgotten and always-

to-be-lamented sister-in-law. The dress of the bride was indeed a perfect *non sequitur*, as my cousin Sippets says. You well know, my dearest Lady Milton, I am not vain, and still less would I say any thing to shock your feelings,—but I think a certain person, had he seen, would have felt a pain.’—

“Where?” said Herbert, laughing; “and whom does she mean?”

“Why you, my dear! Read on,” answered his mother.—

“‘Excuse the partiality of a fond aunt, but indeed a certain brave and, thank God! valiant person has had an immense loss. But Heaven’s will be done!—‘He who soweth, knoweth not when he may reap.’ Arabella is now the interesting wife, the adored better-half of our beloved present. It is therefore wicked to think of him who might have been her former future: that is now irrevocably past, and, as Mr. Siddons says, ‘buried in the tomb of all the Capulets!’

“‘Well the darling child’s head was

dressed very simply, but precisely after the engraving of the '*Jeune Promise*,' in No. 45 of the Parisian *Almanach des Dames*,—her own sweet hazel ringlets, interspersed with a garland of orange flowers, lilies of the valley, white jasmine, and ditto immortals; there was something, it is true, foreign in this *coiffeur*, but the dear girl looked notwithstanding most essentially English, though from the top of her head hung in graceful folds the white veil above-mentioned, which certainly was very Spanish. Her gown was a beautiful specimen of patent net over a white satin slip, trimmed with deep flounces of point and patent. Her sleeves were prodigiously wide at the top, and tapered away to the waists, in what that absurd creature, Sippets, called leg of veal fashion, though our dear girl blushed extremely at this inuendo, which indeed at such a moment was indelicate, as I hinted to our valued cousin, whose facetious disposition often carries him away. The lovely girl's body corresponded with her

slip, being ornamented with a deep *ruche* of point and patent, whilst her taper waist was confined by a broad *moiré* ribbon, fastened by a mother-of-pearl buckle studded with heartsease, which her dear intended purchased in the Royal Palace at Paris. Well, my dear, her wrists were ornamented each with a bracelet, one composed of the light flaxen ringlets of her devoted present, and the other of beads with a large pink topaz, containing the miniature of the same dear person in his cap and gown, as he took his A. B. C. degree at the University of Aberdeen.

“ ‘To conclude. She had white *prunelle* shoes; gloves ornamented round the tops with a *ruche* of point; and a vastly natural imitation pearl necklace, the gift of her dear future's papa, whose troublesome asthma is certainly wonderfully diminished since I recommended his smoking the leaves of the *datura fastursa*, which my once esteemed friend, Doctor Bleereye, at Bath, assured me

was a *ne plus ultra* for that painful complaint. You may, however, judge, my kind friend, of our distress and agony on the preceding evening, the anxiously expected dress not having arrived until about twenty-two minutes past five, by the evening coach. As our often congenial cousin, Sippets, observed, 'There is, indeed, much between the sowing and the baking,' for of course we are all as anxious as the dear girl herself to try on this miracle of Blondel's talent; when, lo and behold!—I even now tremble at the very retrospect—it was at least four inches too short at the bottom—indecorously short!—and much too tight and low across the bust."—

"No wonder she says lo—and behold!" exclaimed Herbert.

"Pray, do not force a bad pun into my old friend's head against her inclination," replied Lady Milton.—

"What was to be done! I luckily had my smelling bottle of sal volatile, though, indeed, the darling Arabella conducted herself with

wonderful firmness during this trying scene. Not a moment was to be lost, I hastened to my brother, obtained his permission to mount James, the gardener's boy, on the gray pony, though, indeed, he could ill be spared from assisting Joseph in the pantry.'—

“Which does she mean? the boy, or the horse?” asked Herbert.

“Do not interrupt, my dear; we shall soon be at the end.”

“Thank God! for with all my regard for Aunt Claudia, my patience is nearly exhausted.”—

“The dress was immediately forwarded to Blondel to be altered, which she succeeded in doing, by adding a piece of patent at the bottom; covering the seam with a roleau of satin; ditto at the top; and putting in a breadth in the body,—there being no time to make a new one. At twenty three minutes past eight next morning, the apprehensions of our dear child were allayed by the return of little James with the gown, in excellent

time for her to dress for breakfast at nine. So pleased was the liberal-minded future, that he forthwith recompensed little James's zeal with a shilling. We had taken the precaution, in the mean time, with the assistance of dear Lady Mezzleford's maid, who has been twice at Calais, to dress the darling Arabella's hair at half-past six A. M., and in short, to complete her toilette; so, in fact, when the gown arrived, she had nothing to do but to slip it on,—and fervent were our thanksgivings to see that it fitted the dear innocent very comfortably, though still somewhat tight across the chest. The favoured youth of our dearest Arabella's choice awaited our dearest at the foot of the staircase: he was dressed in a lightish blue coat, white Marcellas waistcoat, silk stockings, nicely pinked, which shewed to admiration his manly figure, a crimson watch-ribbon, and white kersey inexpressibles,—presenting altogether a noble and dignified aspect. His adored Arabella blushed deeply when they met. He saluted

her right hand, and we then entered the breakfast-room, where we were received by the four bridesmaids.

“ ‘ These maids would indeed have looked more unique had they not been eclipsed by the superior elegance of the sweet about-to-be-bride. They were dressed in rose-coloured satin slips, with ditto coloured shoes, and deep zig-zag trimmings of *blonde* and *bouquets* of forget-me-nots, roses, pansies, and love-lies-bleeding; their hair adorned with wreaths of ditto. They each wore a brooch of turquoise, in the shape of an anchor; a happy conceit of our comical cousin Luke Sippets, signifying, as he said, that ‘ they hoped to ride out the storm of spinstership.’ I declare I blushed deeply at this explanation: though you well know, my dear Lady Milton, that I positively refused the great Irish Colonel O’Flancy, who so dreadfully distinguished himself at the battle of Lincelles, as well as Dr. Bleereye, who is so eminent in all nervous and hypochondriacal cases at Bath; and

indeed it is highly conjecturable that I should now have been Mrs. Bleereye, had not my good brother been much shocked at the rather indelicate language of the M. D., when my poor maid died of the dropsy, when I went to drink the waters. Well, my dear Lady Milton, to each of these bridesmaids was added a ditto man, all of them friends of our sweetest Arabella's choice: they were dressed in blue coats, white waistoats, nankeen shorts, gold buckles at their knees, and ditto in their shoes. With a grace which was indeed affecting, our dear child presented each of these youths with a posey, attached by a blue-eyed hope ribbon, which she herself pinned to their button-holes. The same was done by our elegant, then future nephew, who, with the dignity and polish of a man-of-fashion, advanced, and chastely saluting the hand of each of his sweet intended's attendants, placed a fragrant nosegay within them. It was now nearly eleven; and as my dear brother determined, weather permitting, that we

should proceed on foot to the sacred edifice, where the indissoluble knot was to be tied, in order to give our worthy neighbours a full sight of the interesting scene, Sippets being appointed master of the ceremonies, he marshalled us all in the drawing-room, and at the signal, ready—present—fire—we moved off, Luke jocosely observing, ‘that the word fire was emblematic of the holy flame which burnt in the breasts of the interesting, about-to-be-united duet.’ First went the gardener in his best clothes, followed by the coachman in his ditto livery, attended by as many of the household as could be spared from their interesting functions in-doors—though all crowded forward, as that ludicrous creature Luke said, ‘to take a last look at Miss Arabella Babingtree;’ she, poor dear! blushed vastly at this *jeu-d’esprit*. Well, then went two and two,—each gentleman handing a lady,—the different dear friends who had accepted our invitation; then bridesmen, each with his ditto maid, two and two;—

then went I; I had on my silver lustre dress, which was new trimmed for the occasion, and a new white *gros de Naples* bonnet,—my now dear nephew said it was vastly becoming. I was supported by that facetious personage, Cousin Sippets, whose jovial disposition was eminently serviceable in keeping up my spirits during this trying juncture, though I had the precaution of putting a phial of æther and sal volatile into my reticule, which hung on my left arm; it was worked in beads, beautifully executed by our dear Lady Mizzleford, representing Love taking Time by the forelock. Next came the very-shortly-to-be-bride, blushing prodigiously, supported by her own doating parent on one side, and highly respected, about-to-be-in-a-few-minutes father-in-law. Immediately followed the amiable youth, the select object of our child's love, arm in arm with sister Gertrude and Lady Mizzleford. The cavalcade was closed by the beadle, constable, churchwardens, and schoolmaster of our peaceful

parish, at the head of our very thriving village seminary, all dressed in their best Sunday clothes. I have no doubt that my admirable receipt for chilblains, if used opportunely, will relieve the poor little things this winter from those irritating companions.

“ ‘ In this order we arrived at church, where we were met by our worthy friend the Curate, who is looking much better from the use of the pills, which so completely succeeded in curing that very tidy woman, Mrs. Sacksheaf, our late esteemed tithesman’s widow, who suffered martyrdom from cramps, somnambulism, and night-mares. The awful ceremony was at length concluded: the dear girl having supported herself throughout with a degree of dignity, firmness, piety, modesty, and devotion, truly worthy of the days of the ancient martyrs; though, in plighting her troth, she turned very pale, but recovered herself with wonderful presence of mind, although the ring pinched her finger a little. It is true also, our darling Gertrude felt somewhat faint, and the dear

present sister trembled very much ; but we nevertheless dried up our tears—tears of holy joy, and returned to the Grove in the same manner in which we came, save that the blushing bride now leaned on the arm of her beloved present, while the bells of the church struck up an enlivening peal. In the meantime a splendid repast had been prepared ;—covers were laid for forty, the exact number of our party, and consisted (with the exception of hot mashed potatoes, mock turtle soup, and roast fowls), of cold viands ; such as, pies, hams, fruits, creams, and confectionaries. Joseph acquitted himself most admirably, and was assisted by six very picked youths, of excellent character, who were accustomed to wait at the assize dinners and corporation feasts : they were dressed in green coats, cord inexpressibles, white waistcoats, ditto stockings, and had each a large favour. The arrangement of the table was as, viz. : at the bottom, where sat my dear brother, was a beautiful tongue, carved so as to represent a sleeping Cupid ;

his head of carrot, his wings of turnip, and his quiver of parsnip, with a bleeding heart of beet-root in his hand: and you may judge of the confusion of the lovely bride, when she was asked by her fond parent, if he should send her a small slice of the sleeping god with her cold fowl, of which that absurd creature, Luke Sippets, had sent her the merry-thought. In the centre, and immediately opposite the dear duet, Batter had placed a model of the Temple of Hymen, filled with hearts, cupids, chains, arrows, and other devices, emblematical of our sweet child's change of name; together with a number of sugar-plums, filled with appropriate mottos: and I saw the tear of pride and modesty glisten in her eye, when her attentive present, cracking a pistachio with his teeth, unfolded the motto, and placed it significantly before her. She rolled it up, and passed it to me, desiring I would return it safe; and no wonder, for it was very coincidental and affecting, being as follows:

' Oh, quel bonheur mon cœur éprouve,
Quand près de toi il se retrouve.'

At the top of the table, where I sat surrounded by the bridesmen, was placed a dish of two cold Turkey polls, highly garnished with water-cress; which dear Gertrude had designed to represent two turtle-doves sitting in a nest of foliage: and indeed the imitation was so very natural as to affect our dear child, and attract the attention of her amiable present; indeed, I ventured to suggest to Gertrude, the previous evening, that there was something perhaps indelicate in the allusion. Well, down the flanks were placed a profusion of cold meats and sallads; amongst which jellies kept nodding to *blanc mange's* exactly like partners in a country dance, as that funny man, Luke Sippets, whispered in my ear. Down the middle, from me to my brother, extended a line of six pine apples, four dishes of grapes, and six of golden pippins, and nonpareils, all from the gardens of our esteemed friend Sir Claudius Capon, who

is a highly cultivated member of the R. H. S., and were, indeed, a rich compliment to our dear girl's merits. The grapes were, indeed, admirable: and imagine how our sweet Arabella blushed, when her darling Mr. Scratchley whispered in her ear, loud enough for every one to hear, 'Oh! Miss Babingtree!' she coloured, and we all smiled at his innocent and respectful forgetfulness; but he recovered with great presence of mind, and said, 'Oh, dearest Mrs. Scratchley, how sour are the grapes now, to you know who?' Arabella said nothing; but her eye looked a whole discourse, and I thought of the mixed sensations of your dear victorious hero, could he have been in our now darling nephew's proud situation.'—

"Oh, she meant me, did she!" exclaimed Herbert: "thank God! I have escaped that, at all events. Why aunt Claudia must have been crazy, to have even thought of me; but let us hasten to the end, for my patience is exhausted."—

“ ‘ As soon as the health of the darling Duo had been drunk, which the lesser half of our child turned with a firm and dignified voice, in a neat and very appropriate extempore speech, the heads of which had been given to him by his respected parents a few days previous, it was determined that the carriage should draw up, which was destined to convey the dear couple to Margate, where they are now indulging in all the chaste joys of the honey-moon. It was our wish to spare my dear brother, as well as ourselves, the protracted thoughts of the irreparable temporary loss we were about to suffer ; and as delays are dangerous, dear Mr. Scratchley, senior, winked to his now beloved daughter-in-law, who, rising, looked for a moment pale, very pale, as she heard the grating of the carriage-wheels on the gravel ; but quickly recovering, she threw her arms round the neck of her parent, who blessed her, as did her amiable choice round that of his estimable mother, and then chastely saluted me on the left cheek. I was

much agitated, but suppressed my emotion. In the mean time, Sippets had formed the rest of the party in two lines in the hall, through which our now noble-minded and handsome nephew at once led his blushing lamb, with an air of proud triumph, to the new yellow chariot which awaited them (in the pocket of which I directed Batter to place a paper of chicken sandwiches, and half a pint of excellent home-made cowslip wine, an innocent and refreshing restorative); and in a few seconds, amidst a thousand God bless you's! the dear duet were hastening towards Margate, as fast as four neat posters could carry them; the amiable choice of our dear girl having, with his usual liberality, promised to each of the postilions, who were the steadiest drivers from the 'Hen and Chickens,' an extra sixpence each, if they drove him a dashing pace. They were dressed in red jackets and blue collars, new for the event, white hats, and ditto inexpressibles, highly crimped shirts, and large favours. But I am

sorry, my dearest friend, to say, that I must reserve the minute details of this most imposing event to another day, as I am called upon to attend in the housekeeper's room, sister Gertrude's favourite pug having swallowed a fish-bone, and great fears are entertained for its, to my sister, very valuable life. All unite in kindest regards and remembrances to your brave boy. I will write again shortly, more at length ; until then, God bless you ! From your ever sincere and affectionate friend,

“ ‘ CLAUDIA JACINTHA BABINGTON.

“ ‘ P.S. I forgot to say, that the dear bride's travelling-dress was an elegant hat of rose-coloured plush, with a superb pelisse of canary-coloured *gros de Naples*, and a beautiful Scotch cachemire, copied from that worn by the Persian Ambassador. The darling lesser half wore a neat undress blue military frock, buff waistcoat, grey longs ; and, with the most delicate attention to his dearest wife, fawn-coloured Wellington boots, in order not to

soil her flounces,—a sample of highly-cultivated politeness, which he copied from our valuable friend Sir Claudius Capon, who did ditto on his own marriage.—I re-open my letter to say, that I have just heard from our sweet child, who felt no other ill effects from her journey to Margate, than a little sea-sickness as she approached the coast.’”

“With all my heart do I wish the triumphant present joy of his interesting possession!” exclaimed Herbert, as he returned into his mother’s hands this interminable detail, of what the good old lady called a brief account; “though my conscience does not accuse me of having contributed in the slightest degree to the glory of his conquest. For once in her life, Aunt Claudia has been betrayed into a joke as far as regards you; she has perhaps imbibed some of the jocular virus of that excessively tiresome man Mr. Sippets. I should much regret if she suspected me of having ever trifled with her niece’s feelings. The

nature of your sex may render a certain proportion of coquetry excusable; but in ours, nothing can be more despicable or unmanly."

"You must confess, however," rejoined Lady Milton, smiling, "that you were considered a most dangerous person before you left England, exactly what your friend Sidney calls a *Matadonna*: I heard of endless flirtations."

"That is to say, of my having danced more than once in a week, and spoken more than twice during one night to the same person, which simple occurrence is quite sufficient to set all the London gossips on the *qui vive*. Why, I saw my name opposite to that of Lady Susan Bosville's in the Morning Post account of twelve successive Almack's, though at that very moment I was enjoying all the luxuries of a Spanish bivouac, or the equally agreeable partners one constantly encounters in a Portuguese cottage."

"Oh! but there was a whole catalogue of Lady Janes, Agathas, and Theodosias, to

whom you were given before your departure; not to mention a Court Guide full of Misses; indeed scarcely a day passed without my being seriously congratulated upon my speedy prospect of being connected with the Peerage."

"If your ambitious prospect of attaining that distinction depends on me, banish all thoughts of it from your calculation, and rather trust to the more solid talents and merit of my father, to render you eligible for a column in Mr. Debrett's pages, than to my collateral assistance."

"That is the last thing," replied Lady Milton, "which can ever influence my thoughts or feelings in the selection of a daughter-in-law; though, were it otherwise, where is the extraordinary ambition of my desiring to see you united to some amiable young woman of rank? Why should not you aspire to that distinction which so many others, with fewer pretensions than yourself, attain every day?"

"Do you often hear of much happiness being the result of these ill-assorted unions?"

“Certainly!” replied Lady Milton. “How many are there amongst the daughters of our nobility, whose dignified and graceful manners, cultivated education, superior talent, and strict principles, render them as worthy to sustain the dignity of a ducal coronet, as their domestic virtues, simplicity, and amiable disposition, are adapted to insure the happiness of a husband, though he were selected from a more humble station in life.”

“Nothing can be more true,” answered Herbert. “I willingly admit, that there is no country in the world where one meets with such perfect models of every feminine perfection as amongst the wives and daughters of the English aristocracy, which is perhaps one of the principal reasons why our nobility enjoy a great portion of public respect, and are looked up to, collectively speaking, in a much higher degree by their countrymen, than those of any other European nation. I will also acknowledge, that there are many, perhaps the major part, who are equally calculated to

shed lustre and dignity on a Court, as they are adapted to embellish and confer happiness on a cottage: but," added Herbert, whose attachment to his venerable sovereign and his illustrious consort bordered on enthusiasm, "it is natural that the manners and morals of the Court should influence the conduct of the higher classes: we ought to expect some good qualities in our nobility when we see the King and Queen not only the most forward in setting the brightest example of every domestic excellence, but using their influence to encourage its cultivation amongst their subjects."

"I do not despair, in despite of your denial, to see you become a proselyte to what you call my ambitious projects," rejoined Lady Milton.

"Not under existing circumstances, most certainly," answered Herbert earnestly; "I will admit the theory, but must renounce the practice; besides, I might meet with the same fate as some of my family, and unfortunately fix my choice on the daughter of one of those who inwardly consider the union of their chil-

dren with men of inferior, or rather no rank, as an absolute degradation, an irrefragable blot on the family escutcheon."

"In this country, and in these days when genius and merit are the almost certain passports to the highest offices and dignities of the State, and when we see the names of distinguished men of every profession, augmenting, and adding lustre to the peerage, by the accession of their talents and virtues, few people can be so foolish as to despise such connexions."

"You must permit me to be a little sceptical," rejoined Herbert, "as I well know that there are many who, although they may consent from motives of pecuniary or borough interest, yet the sons-in-law are considered as intruders—creatures upon sufferance, whom the papa rarely condescends to patronize, unless he intends borrowing money; whom the mamma treats with the most forbidding coolness, lest 'the man' should become familiar, and presume to look upon himself as one of

the family; and whom the sisters perpetually taunt with supercilious comparisons between their own exalted birth and fashionable connexions, and his low origin and vulgar acquaintance?"

"But if the man be happy with his wife, what need he care for her connexions?"

"If," replied Herbert;—"that is the difficulty. What think you of the lady-wife addressing her husband on his remonstrating with her for a flagrant act of extravagance and folly, with this speech—'Mr. Thing-a-me, you appear to forget that you are addressing an Earl's daughter:—pray, Sir, reserve your horrid, low, mercantile observations for those vulgar griffins your sisters; whom, by-the-bye, I have desired the servants not to admit; and bear in mind, Sir, that I did not condescend to connect myself with you or them for the purpose of becoming the subject of your lectures on political economy:—so ring the bell, as I have promised to go to the sale at Philips's.'"

"You are really making out a most exaggerated case," rejoined Lady Milton; "no one ever heard of such an impudent, heartless woman."

"Indeed," answered Herbert, "what I have just repeated was addressed verbatim by Lady Barbara Sterling, in my presence, to my friend Harry, who flattered himself that he had married an angel; besides, I shall not easily forget Lady Brassford's reply to my congratulations on her daughter's marriage with Sterling, who is really one of the most accomplished, gentlemanly men in London, although his father certainly had the bad taste to amass a splendid fortune by commerce."

"What was the reply? something extremely impertinent, I dare say?" said Lady Milton, "and probably not less *deplacé*? as her Ladyship's grandfather was himself a simple manufacturer."

"Oh! her Ladyship begged me to reserve my congratulations for Lord Brassford, to whom was due the whole merit of this *mes-*

alliance, to which she had never given her consent. 'I have no doubt,' added her Ladyship, curling up her lip, 'that all you say about Mr.—Mr.—the man with the name which—'—'Always puts one in mind of a pound note,' exclaimed one of the daughters, giggling.—'I quite forget it,' continued Lady Brassford, 'but it is very probable, that he may be very good-looking, clean, and civil, and, in fact, so are all the shopmen now at Cooper's or Howel's, though I scarcely know him by sight. He may be also very well informed and properly behaved;—that is to say, very well for a trader. But I know nothing about him, nor do we propose enlarging our acquaintance;—do we, girls?' added her Ladyship, turning to her daughters.—'What! with Barbara's Sunday buck, as my brother calls him?' answered the young ladies, 'certainly not. Hitherto, mamma, I think you have communicated with these sort of people through papa's steward.'—'And it is not my intention to make any exception for the man

whom Barbara has chosen to connect herself with,' added Lady Brassford.

"This is quite in keeping with Lady Brassford's conduct," answered Lady Milton;—"but seriously, my dear, you are now arrived at an age when you ought to look out for a wife: it is my anxious desire, as well as your father's wish, that you should, ere long, be happily settled; your manners, your high character, your person and your prospects—"

"I believe the last will have the greatest influence;—that is the touchstone; and I am not so foolish as to suppose that I have been noticed from any other motive than for my prospects. The broad acres of Milton Park are the great lure, *quant à moi, j'y suis pour bien peu de chose.*"

"You do yourself great injustice," rejoined Lady Milton, "and judge much too severely of our sex: surely you do not think all women so selfish, so mercenary?"

"Not all, certainly!" answered Herbert; "but I have met with so many instances of

matrimonial misery, arising from this cause; I have witnessed so few happy unions amongst the *habitués* of the fashionable world, that you cannot be surprised at my want of confidence."

"But why judge of the whole by a few isolated instances;—that is not in unison with your usual impartiality?"

"You cannot deny," answered Colonel Milton, "that among the votaries of fashion,—those, in short, who are devoted to the heartless system of a London life,—establishment is the first and only consideration. The temper, disposition, and character of a man,—nay, indeed, the very intellect, is a secondary object, provided his fortune is large, and he can make good settlements. What do the joys of a happy home and domestic comfort weigh in the scale against an operabox, the run of Almack's, and the *entrée* to the Duke of Buxton's parties. The *marito*, or rather *patito*, may amuse himself with Vauxhall, Sadler's Wells, or white-bait par-

ties to Greenwich; he may go any where, in short, but to the same place with his wife; unless, indeed, it be for the purpose of paying her losses at *ecarté*. By-the-bye," added Herbert, "those water-parties will have lost half their merit in the eyes of some wives, and a few elder sons, when the danger of shooting London Bridge is removed."

"But why always dwell on the gloomy side of the prospect?" replied Lady Milton; "surely you have sufficient knowledge of the world to be more wise and fortunate in your choice? You might fix—"

"Suppose I had already fixed—irrevocably fixed!" answered Herbert, interrupting his mother.

Lady Milton instantly perceived by her son's manner and tone of voice, that he was about to make that avowal of his sentiments, for which she had so long and patiently waited—a confession which would at once confirm her apprehensions respecting Emily, or set them at rest for ever. Determining, however,

neither to betray her alarm or anxiety, she replied, with an assumed air of indifference, "Some Spanish beauty, I suppose;—some descendant of the Abencerages?"

"No, my dear mother," rejoined Herbert, "you need not wander so far as the banks of the Genil. I can tell you of a person on the borders of the Thames, who unites all the virtues and beauties,—nay, indeed, some of the persecutions of that ill-fated race, in conjunction with all the perfections of the fairest, the best, of our Island."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Lady Milton with apparent carelessness. "What! scarcely a week in England, not a soul in town, and already in love! Why, my dear, you appear to have adopted the decision and promptitude of the hero under whom you have served;—are you equally rapid in your conquests? But I am curious to know who it can be? You have seen no one since your return."

"True," answered her son; "I have seen

no one since my arrival ; but do you imagine that before I quitted England— ?”

“ Oh ! some old flirt !” exclaimed Lady Milton, with forced gaiety : “ the idea of such Gothic constancy never entered my head.”

“ Do not judge so very lightly of my character ? Do you suppose that a few years’ absence can have shaken my affections ? Do you suppose that I can have so easily forgotten her, whose equal I never beheld ; of whose disinterested affection I cannot doubt ; and who, I have reason to flatter myself, has refused the most splendid, the noblest alliance, on my account ?”

“ Who can this paragon be ?” rejoined Lady Milton. “ However,” added her Ladyship, with much earnestness, “ I entertain such perfect reliance on your taste and prudence, that I am convinced it can be no one of whom your father and I shall not approve.”

“ My taste,” rejoined Herbert, “ must meet with your approbation : my prudence will, however, I fear, sink in your estimation,

when I declare that this person is no other than Miss Manby."

"Miss Manby!" exclaimed Lady Milton, with a tone of voice which plainly evinced her emotion.

"Yes!" replied Colonel Milton with a deep sigh, as if his heart were relieved from some heavy oppression by this avowal;—"yes, it is indeed the foster-child of that unhappy and injured man, to whom my father has shewn such singular and unceasing animosity."

"Then my apprehensions have been too well founded!" answered Lady Milton;—"it is, indeed, most unfortunate."

"Unfortunate!" retorted Herbert, "surely you cannot lament that my affections should be engaged by one so worthy of your esteem and admiration? Unfortunate!" continued he, with increasing warmth and enthusiasm. "Is she not beautiful and unaffected, and virtuous as she is lovely and unassuming? Is she not acknowledged to be one of the

most accomplished and amiable young women in London? Has public opinion, that severe and inexorable judge, ever whispered a thought against her principles or conduct? Has not her hand been sought by young men of the first, the noblest families? And if such a consideration as money can weigh in your mind, or that of my father, has she not an independent fortune, sufficient, amply sufficient, for both our wants, without our becoming a burthen on my father's liberality?"

"Talk not of money," rejoined Lady Milton, ere her son had concluded,—“that is one of the last considerations in the present instance.”

“What, then can be your objection?” exclaimed Herbert, with increasing eagerness and anxiety. “Does she not unite every virtue, every amiable quality, which can be conducive to the honour of my family and my own happiness?” And then taking his mother's hand, he added: “Have I not heard you declare, that had it been the will of

Heaven to have spared my sister, your greatest pride would have been to have seen her resemble Miss Manby in mind and person? Ah, then! if it has pleased Providence to deprive you of one child, why, why reject this opportunity of replacing her by one who evinces every virtue and perfection which you could desire in a daughter?"

Much affected by her son's passionate avowal of his deep-rooted admiration for Emily, as well as by his appeal to her own feelings, Lady Milton continued some moments in silence. At length, wiping away the tears, which were fast falling from her eyes, she said:

"Alas! my child, my affection for you, my dread lest your future happiness should be embittered by disappointment, add poignancy to my feelings. True, most true is it, that were I to consult my own inclinations alone, most gladly would I encourage and promote your attachment to Miss Manby: I know no young woman so worthy of you—

no one of whose conduct and disposition I entertain so good an opinion: but, alas! what avails my approbation, what can my wishes weigh against your father's resolutions? You are acquainted with his detestation to the name of Manby, and I dare not conceal from you my conviction that he never will consent to your union with Emily."

"Not when he is assured of her perfections! Not when he ascertains that the happiness, nay the very existence, of his only son depends on his sanction!"

"I dare not flatter you with the most trifling hope," rejoined Lady Milton: "it would be an act of cruelty, were I to conceal from you a moment longer the just ground of my apprehensions. Indeed," added her Ladyship, "bitterly do I condemn myself for having so long neglected to warn you of my fatal presentiments. Before your departure for Spain, I entertained strong suspicions of your attachment for Miss Manby; but as you were on the point of quitting England, and

as I had the utmost confidence in your friendship—”

“Friendship!” exclaimed Herbert, “that is a most cutting word from you, my dear mother; say, rather, my devoted respect and filial love.”

“Both—all, my dear boy!” replied Lady Milton, affectionately pressing the hand of her son. “But I adopt that word, feeling convinced, that although the strongest ties of blood and affection may unite parents and children, unless friendship, mutual friendship, also exist, there can be no reciprocal confidence; and without confidence, no real love. In the hour of happiness let me feel myself in full possession of your filial attachment; in the hour of sorrow and necessity look on me as your first, your dearest friend. Be to me in prosperity a tender son; in adversity a dear-loved brother;—such is the footing I would ever be upon with my children. Then I shall feel proud of being your parent, for then also I shall feel certain of your confidence.”

“Then,” replied Herbert fervently, “you have been, and ever will be, my friend—my more than mother! And,” continued he, “if until this time I have refrained from imparting my secret, my only motive was that I might first ascertain the stability of my own affections, as well as the nature of Miss Manby’s sentiments, of which, I can assure you, I was utterly ignorant, when I quitted England;—nay, indeed, I then supposed she would have become the wife of Lord Henry ere the lapse of many weeks.”

“You need not offer any excuse for having hitherto concealed your sentiments from me,” answered Lady Milton kindly: “whatever might have been the cause of your silence, your motives were, I have no doubt, both honourable and reasonable: but,” added her Ladyship, “I beg you will consider, with deep attention, what I am about to communicate; and for your own sake, as well as for that of Miss Manby, abandon all farther pursuit of this hopeless passion.”

“Never!” exclaimed Herbert, “but with my life! Were there a single reasonable ground for the objections which you have to urge, I would yield implicit obedience to your advice; but it is more than cruel to offer up my future happiness as a sacrifice at the altar of the most unnatural hatred which ever entered into the breast of man!”

“Calm this impassioned agitation,” rejoined Lady Milton; “and forget not, my dear child, that your obedience to your parents is the first, the highest duty towards your God and yourself!”

“So long as there are just and reasonable motives for demanding obedience; but—”

“It is not my wish to enter into any argument upon a question of this nature,” said Lady Milton, interrupting her son; “you have hitherto been the comfort, the pride of my existence: I might address to you the flattering compliment applied by our venerable Monarch to one of his sons—‘He is a model of truth, honour, and integrity; he

never caused me a moment's pain or uneasiness in his life ; and when I look at him, I feel proud that I am a parent."

Herbert, much affected by his mother's kindness, felt ashamed of his violence, and remained silent. Lady Milton then added—" Having, within the last year, accidentally discovered from your friend Sidney, that your attachment to Miss Manby was not utterly extinct, and having farther drawn from Mrs. Walden sufficient hints to justify my suspicions of a reciprocal constancy on the part of Miss Manby, I forthwith determined to consult your father on the subject."

" Did you then make known to him my attachment ?"

" Listen, and you shall judge of the method I adopted. In the first place, I ventured to suggest that you were now arrived at an age when it might be desirable, as an only son, for you to settle in life ; I commended your prudence, your good sense, and correct conduct, as well adapted for a married life. I

then requested his opinion on the points which he might consider essential, either as to the rank, fortune, and disposition of a daughter-in-law. Lastly, I hinted at your being on intimate terms with Miss Manby, whom I mentioned as combining every quality which could be desired; and, in short, that she had rejected the offer of an alliance with one of the noblest families in England, as I suspected, on your account."

"What was my father's reply?" demanded Herbert, with the greatest eagerness.

"A few days previous to your return," rejoined Lady Milton, opening her letter-case, "this answer reached me: read, and judge for yourself."

Herbert, with a trembling hand, took the letter from his mother, and after turning over the formal, precise epistle, which announced Sir Herbert's immediate return, read the following brief passage relative to himself:—

"In reply to your interrogations touching the expediency of my son's selecting a wife, I

beg to say that I am strongly averse to the system of young men marrying at such an early period in life ; yet, as such an arrangement appears desirable to you, I shall withdraw my objections. You have, then, my authority to consent to his union with any young woman whose disposition, principles, and family, are amiable, correct, and respectable. Rank, though desirable, is not essential ; and fortune, though worthy of consideration, is not absolutely necessary : my solicitor in London being furnished with proper instructions how to proceed in all pecuniary matters, it is superfluous to enlarge on that head. As to the young woman to whom you allude, I will hear nothing ; moreover, I strictly forbid you to repeat her name again, and command you to inform my son, that unless he forthwith discontinue all intercourse with that person, he will draw inevitable ruin on himself, and call forth my eternal displeasure."

"Good God!" exclaimed Herbert, as he

concluded this brief exposition of his father's sentiments; "can it be possible that he can persist in his animosity from generation to generation? Whence this unnatural rancour, this almost inhuman hatred without even a word of explanation?"

"It appears not less extraordinary to me than to yourself," answered Lady Milton, "and I am much inclined to suspect that some secret enemy both to yourself and Emily has poisoned your father's mind against her. My suspicions have indeed been awakened in a quarter which for the present I shall not communicate; but, for God's sake! be on your guard!"

"What enemy can I have who could be base enough to calumniate Miss Manby? And yet," said he, "it must be so: my father is a good and just man, incapable of continuing this unholy rancour against the foster-child of the unhappy Major. When he sees her—when he hears the opinion of the world—when he ascertains more explicitly your

high sentiments, his eyes will be opened; he must relent! his prejudices must give way before the conviction of her virtues; he will not then refuse—he cannot have the cruelty to blast my happiness for ever!”

“Though I dare not flatter you with any prospect of success,” replied Lady Milton, “yet I will exert all my influence to convince him of his error; I will use every possible argument to obtain his consent: in the meantime, tell me if you have declared your sentiments, or entered into any engagements with Miss Manby?”

“Neither, most certainly!” answered Herbert; “it would have been an ill method of repaying your confidence in me, had I taken such a step without your knowledge or consent; and as to contracting arrangements, such is my opinion of Emily, that I do not believe she would ever consent to such a measure, unless I appeared before her armed at least with your approbation. I will fairly avow that she has been made acquainted with my attach-

ment to her: the Baroness having, during my absence, and without my knowledge or authority, communicated a secret which I imagined was unknown to all but Sidney and myself."

"Pursue the same prudent line of conduct," rejoined Lady Milton, "and, if possible, avoid throwing yourself in her way until your father's return; and if you should meet, prevent, if possible, any farther declaration of your feelings."

"I have understood that it is Miss Manby's intention to pass the winter with the Lymingtons: the probability of our meeting is therefore very slight; should, however, such a circumstance take place, do not expect too much of me. Consider the duration of my attachment, and the length of time which has elapsed since I saw her; but, more than all, that the destinies of my future life depend on her."

"I can well imagine the difficulty of your position; therefore, I will exact no promise;—all I entreat is, that you will avoid compromising either yourself or Miss Manby. Your

submission, your forbearance, will give me stronger grounds for pleading in your favour, and to you greater claims to your father's indulgence. I will not conceal from you," added Lady Milton, "that the happiest day of my existence will be that which sees you united to Miss Manby; my greatest pride, to possess two such children."

It was not until the arrival of the travellers at the summit of one of the most romantic and lovely hills in Devonshire, commanding a view of the valley in which was situated Milton Park, that Herbert was aroused from the reverie in which he had been plunged by this conversation.

"Look, Herbert!" exclaimed Lady Milton, as her eye first caught the sight of the village spire, contiguous to the mansion; "there is Milton; there, amidst that dark mass of forest trees, stands the house, which, with the greater portion of the surrounding estates, will one day be your property!"

"May Heaven remove my right of posses-

sion to the most distant period !” replied Herbert, as he lifted up his eyes to gaze upon the lovely prospect, which spread itself for many miles before them.

The moderate pace of the postilions, as they relaxed their speed to descend the steep declivity, gave the young Colonel a few moments' leisure to examine the fair scene which stretched itself at his feet. It was not without mixed sensations of curiosity and delight that he examined the fertile tract of country, hills, glens, and water, which, in the course of nature, were destined, at some future period, to become his inheritance. The place had an additional charm in his mind, from its having been, during several centuries, in the possession of his ancestors, one of whom had rebuilt the mansion in the reign of Elizabeth; but his pleasure and pride augmented, when he recollected, that although the estate had been for a period alienated from his family, it had been again restored to them through the industry, merit, and exertions of his own father, who

had continued in India for a much greater length of time than he had intended, for the sole purpose of ransoming the hereditary property from the hands of its possessor; and who, fortunately for Sir Herbert, had been obliged to dispose of his purchase, at a price, as it afterwards appeared, much below its intrinsic value.

Notwithstanding the advanced season of the year, nature still retained all the glowing loveliness of its autumnal garb, the beauty of which was heightened by the brightness of a clear, unclouded sky, and gleaming sun, whose beams danced playfully on a hundred sparkling rills, or were reflected from the ruddy projections of the sandstone-rocks, which here and there peeped through the interstices of the surrounding woods. Encircled on three sides by successive ranges of lofty hills, clothed almost to their summits with wood, lay the fertile valley in which was situated the old manor house, the rich, yet monotonous fertility of the vale itself being relieved and

broken by alternate undulation of dale, dingle, and upland, and from its being indented ever and anon by the projections of the neighbouring woodlands, or intersected by the ravines, which here and there stretched themselves to a considerable distance across the lower grounds. Of the mansion itself, the quaint and slender octangular chimneys and piqued gables, with here and there the glittering of a casement, as the rays of the sun darted on its panes, gleaming like the burners of a lighthouse, were alone visible from amidst the mass of lofty and majestic timber in which it was embosomed. The features of nature were rendered more picturesque from the green foliage having been partially scattered and torn by the winds from the gnarled and distorted limbs of the trees, and which had given place to a bright clothing of the most beautiful red and golden tints, here and there relieved by the more rural appearance of the lofty cedars and firs, which raised their dark and graceful branches above the scathed

heads of their deciduous brethren. On the top of one of the loftiest hills, which shielded the valley from the northern blast, where masses of black and gray stone exposed their broken and rugged points from amidst the broom and heather which clothed its summit, a considerable body of water appeared to take its rise. After augmenting its currents by the addition of several tributary springs, the stream collected itself in a deep basin, encircled by huge masses of stone, overhung with beech, hokery, and sycamore: after reposing awhile, as if to acquire greater energy to pursue its course, the torrent rushed with tremendous force between the high and impending jaws of two lofty rocks, which reared themselves in the most fantastic forms on either side; then it cast itself in one undivided sheet, rushing over a rocky ledge to the depth of nearly sixty feet, into a dark chasm, where for a short time it disappeared, concealed by the stems and still remaining foliage of the neighbouring plantations. From the bottom

of the chasm arose a light and curling vapour, partly hid from the sight by the buttresses of a single arched bridge thrown across the abyss, which, from the extreme lightness of its structure, had all the appearance of being poised in air, or, at all events, fully entitled to the appellation of the "Flying Bridge;" to which, as well as to the chasm beneath, was attached a family tradition of considerable interest. At the foot of the fall, the still beautiful verdure of the herbage and evergreen shrubs richly contrasted with the barren and stern appearance of the distant downs, but more particularly with the rugged and broken asperities of the layers of rock, whose rugged and overhanging ribs seemed alone prevented from overwhelming the glen beneath, by the chains of ivy and other parasitical plants which clung to and bound their sides. From this spot the waters of the cascade glided amidst the level grounds towards the centre of the park, decreasing in velocity, but proportionably augmenting in width, until the

enlargement of its banks gave it the appearance of a broad and graceful mere, on the borders of which stood the mansion itself. Hence it continued its course southward down the valley, its progress being traced by the sparkling wheels of numerous water-mills, or marked by the gleams of light shooting from under the arches of some distant bridge.

The travellers had scarcely arrived at the bottom of the declivity, which brought them near the antiquated iron-gates of the lodge, when their surprise was excited by the appearance of a large body of the tenantry, who had assembled for the purpose of welcoming their arrival; and it was with a heart overflowing with pride and delight, that Herbert took possession of the ancient abode of his forefathers.

CHAPTER III.

ON the arrival of Alfred Milton at the Park, which occurred in the course of a few days, Herbert seized the earliest opportunity of confiding to his cousin his sentiments with regard to Miss Manby, together with the substance of Sir Herbert's reply to Lady Milton's letter. It was with a strong feeling of inward satisfaction, though with an outward appearance of deep regret, that Alfred listened to an explanation which promised the speedy completion of his own base and remorseless projects, and the consequent ruin of his unsuspecting cousin. Not a feeling of compunction, not a spark of pity or generosity was awakened for his intended victim; he seemed like one sold to the demon of Malice, who had banished every kind and honourable sensation from his mind, resolv-

ing, like his hellish prototype, to instigate his cousin, by every art and persuasion, to commit such an act of disobedience as must for ever blast his hopes. After a brief mutual explanation between the young men, of their real or pretended motives for having hitherto remained silent on the subject, Alfred exclaimed, "I will fairly confess to you, my dear Berty, that I also strongly suspected your attachment before you left us; and although you did not subsequently allude to the subject in your letters, yet in a matter of such vital interest to me as your happiness, it was impossible for me to continue tranquil; you must, therefore, forgive me, if I have pushed my curiosity perhaps a little farther than your reserve warranted."

"Talk not of forgiveness," replied Herbert, completely deceived; "it is I that ought to apologize for any unkind reserve; but you now know my motives."

"And excellent they were," answered Alfred; "just what I should have expected,

and indeed, without flattering myself, anticipated ; as I hoped the time would come, when, if necessary, you would call me to your councils."

" You did right, my dear Alfred," rejoined his cousin ; for you may well suppose, that in every case of pleasure or pain, I should not long keep any secrets from you."

" You will, I trust, always find me worthy of your confidence," answered Alfred, as they crossed the Dead Man's Dance, on their way home from shooting ; (the roar of the fall had caused a moment's pause in the conversation ; a push, thought the monster to himself, as he looked into the chasm, and Milton you were mine ;) but he continued ; " I was extremely anxious to ascertain before your return if your sentiments were still unchanged, thinking that it might possibly be in my power to serve you : I therefore contrived to elicit from your friend Sidney, who, by-the-bye, Herbert, is a sad gossip, that you were still a very model of constancy ;

whilst, on the other hand, I succeeded in drawing from Miss Manby quite sufficient indications to convince me that she was not less faithful than yourself."

"You do not mean to say, Alfred," rejoined his cousin anxiously, "that Sidney has ever betrayed the secret I intrusted to him?—I should not have supposed that possible."

"No, not exactly betrayed," answered the wily Alfred, whose object was to diminish Herbert's confidence in all but himself; "not exactly; but then, you know, he is a wild, incautious fellow; he is too open-hearted, you know—not a man of strong mind either—he is a good fellow too—but, you know, you must be cautious; I like him very much, but I should not exactly choose him as a confidential person in such matters; he's really, in all other respects, a capital creature."

Herbert pondered for a moment: he loved Sidney from his heart, and was not disposed

to believe a syllable to his prejudice; moreover, he remembered that Sidney had given him nearly the same caution about Alfred. And he consoled himself, therefore, with concluding that some private pique existed between them, which he might hereafter be the means of removing.

“How then, if he did not betray my secret, did you discover it?” demanded Colonel Milton.

“Why, I screwed it from him, as if he had been in love himself.”

“You are an extraordinary person, at all events!” exclaimed Herbert; “for my part, I cannot conceive how you are enabled to divine these secrets, which both men and women generally do, or, at least, generally ought to conceal?”

“Nothing could be more simple,” answered the other; “I can give you an infallible key:—for instance, if you observe that a man suddenly becomes sheepish, awkward, dull, and distant; if you remark his eye perpetually

wandering in one direction, and his body in another; if he suddenly becomes fond of music, though he has neither ear nor taste; if, being no dancer, he makes an effort to waltz; and, if being an eternal caperer, he never waltzes at all; if you see him perspiring up and down Kensington Gardens, carrying parasols by the hour, though he hates walking worse than his shoemaker's bill; if you observe him throwing down a cutlet *à la minute*, to hurry to the play at seven, though he never breakfasts until four; if you hear him declare every place a bore, where *she* is not, and every one else a bore if she is; above all, if he denounces war to the carnal delights of sitting late after dinner, and frequents picture-galleries before breakfast; if he abhors the Clubs and Macao at night, and attends Covent Garden for posies in the morning; in short, if he deserts Melton and Newmarket, and, above all, affects to sneeze at the sight of a snuff-box, though he has monopolized all Fribourg's Martinique for a

dozen years—you may then make up your mind that he is thoroughly in for it.”

Herbert, who could not avoid laughing at his cousin's plan for ascertaining the susceptibility of his friends' hearts, now said, “This may do very well for the men, but you must surely find it a difficult matter to detect the women?”

“Not in the least,” retorted Alfred. “If you suspect any man being preferred by any particular damsel, I have an excellent sesame for them also :—for instance, merely mention the suspected man's name casually, as being a very worthy, good, plodding creature, but an intense bore; if that calls forth neither blush nor sign of impatience, add, that you wonder he should have had the spirit to run away with Miss Green or Mrs. Brown, though you pity the woman. If this does not make her wince, confound him! break his head or his leg hunting, blow off his nose or his occiput shooting, or, if he be a *militaire*, wound him horribly in Spain, or marry him

to a Gitana;—I will answer that any of these methods, properly applied, will draw like a blister.”

“I hope,” rejoined Herbert, “you did not apply any of these violent pectorals to poor Miss Manby: at all events I am most thankful for your kind exertions, and am extremely anxious to know what you think best to be done; though I fear,” continued Herbert, “that I shall find it no easy matter to reconcile my affection for her with my duty and obedience to my father, of whose apparently unbending resolution there appears to be no doubt.”

“By G—d!” rejoined Alfred, “it is the hardest, the most cruel case I ever heard of! I am the last man in Christendom, my dear Herbert, that would urge any one to act in opposition to the wishes of his parents, where there was the slightest ground for justice or reason on their side; but really, in the present instance, I cannot help declaring, in despite of my respect for my uncle, that his conduct

appears almost inhuman ;—nay, I could not have believed it possible !”

“ It is, indeed, cruel,” replied Herbert, with much earnestness : “ he threatens me with his curse, and commands me to break off all intercourse with her, under pain of his eternal displeasure.”

“ Inconceivable harshness ! inexplicable rancour ! and that also without the slightest reason, without the least explanation. It must be,” added he, after a few moments’ pause, during which he watched his cousin’s countenance through the corner of his eye, “ some infamous designing wretch, who has views on you or Miss Manby, who must have poisoned his mind against her ; but I will not rest until I have discovered the vile traducer, and—”

“ If you do,” exclaimed Herbert, “ he shall most assuredly rue the day that gave him birth : either his blood or mine shall answer for it ; if, indeed, it be a man.”

“ And if it be a woman, leave her to me,

Herbert," rejoined the cousin: "you shall not complain of not being sufficiently avenged. To tell you the truth, I suspect, strongly suspect—"

"Who? who can you suppose capable of such dastardly conduct?" demanded Herbert.

Alfred had not seen Lady Catesby since the scene at Beau-Regard: he had written, his letters had been returned: he had called, but had been refused admittance; nor could he either meet or obtain access to her. He knew well that she was too much in his power to expose him openly, but he feared she might adopt some anonymous method of putting Herbert on his guard: he therefore determined to seize this opportunity of defeating any underhand attempts on her part to counteract his plans.

"Promise me, my dear Herbert," said the artful traitor, "not to take any notice at present, if I communicate my suspicions: you may otherwise mar my plan for completely detecting and exposing her to your father."

“What! is it a woman?” exclaimed Herbert, with surprise! “I could hardly have thought it possible; however, in that case, I assent.”

“Well, then,” answered his companion, “I have very strong grounds, which I will explain hereafter, to think that it is Lady Catesby.”

“Lady Catesby! she is the last person I could have supposed capable of such infamy! What can be her motive?”

“Love for you, Herbert, and jealousy of Miss Manby.”

“I never paid her the slightest attention, and she always appeared attached to Emily.”

“Hem!” exclaimed Alfred, and then significantly exclaimed, “you do not know her quite so well as I do. Your indifference excited her passion, and her civility to Miss Manby was merely intended to draw you near her; for, rely on it, she found you out. Jealousy has the eyes of Argus. But leave her to me; and in the event of your receiving

any anonymous letters, send them to me, and you shall quickly discover the author."

Herbert's reply to this apparent friendly warning was precisely what Alfred could have desired. He quickly perceived that his cousin's hopes were strengthened; but that he was prepared to treat with contempt any anonymous communication injurious to himself.

"The more I consider the matter," said Alfred, after a little reflection, "the more convinced I feel that your father, as a man of justice and common sense, cannot avoid withdrawing his objections, which evidently arise from error and calumny; for it is monstrous to suppose him wicked enough to visit the enmity he entertained against Major Manby upon his daughter. For my part, I will frankly avow, since you ask my opinion, that were I in your situation, I should have no scruple in marrying her at once: she is well off, and you have a few hundreds a-year; together, sufficient for the present; and al-

though the old boy may storm and rave a little at first, yet I will wager my existence he relents, and forgives when once you are married."

"From all I hear, he is on the contrary quite the kind of character to disinherit me; and should I ever forgive myself for entailing misery on Miss Manby?"

"You may call 2500*l.* a-year, misery, if you like, Herbert; I wish I had it, that's all. But do you imagine that, after broiling in India for the last forty years to repurchase this place for his family, he would leave it to some will-o'-the-wisp, to be born perhaps a hundred years hence, and half its produce to be devoured in the mean time by Chancery and trustees? or perhaps you suppose he would adopt such a very sage person as myself as his heir? Marry, Herbert, take my advice, and I wish no better disinheritance than yours."

"Were I to yield to my own inclinations, Alfred," replied his cousin, "I should scarcely have waited for your advice; but I have firmly

resolved not to take any decided measures before my father's return: he shall not have it in his power to accuse me of profiting by his absence to commit an act of disobedience, in wilful opposition to his commands; I should then forfeit, not only every claim to his confidence, but to his future indulgence."

Alfred, who perceived that he had rather miscalculated his powers of persuasion, and declared himself a little too promptly, indeed, that his cousin's mind was not yet sufficiently ripe for his purpose, now resolved to try another scheme, more likely to succeed.

"Of course, my dear Herbert, I can have no other interest at heart, but that of your happiness: you asked my advice, and I freely gave it, being confident in my own mind of the result."

"I thank you most cordially," replied Colonel Milton, "but my father has ever been most liberal and generous; every wish has been gratified, and it would be an act of vile ingratitude were I to act, perhaps needlessly,

in opposition to his wishes. Yet," added he, "although I decline to follow the line you profess at present, I will fairly avow that my mind is made up as to my subsequent conduct."

Alfred with difficulty suppressed his joy at this unlooked-for declaration, which promised future, if not immediate success. Concealing his satisfaction, he merely replied, "Of course, Herbert, you are the best judge—*vous en êtes le maître*; but let me caution you to take care that you carry not your scruples beyond Miss Manby's patience. After all, where is the moral turpitude of your marrying a young woman of eminent virtue, irreproachable character, and independent fortune, who at this moment might have been a countess, and, if you do not take care, will yet be a peeress!"

"What do you mean?" demanded Herbert eagerly; "I never heard of any other refusal but that of Lord Henry."

"Exactly!" replied Alfred, "there is the

danger. Intelligence reached London, the morning I left it, of his elder brother's death in Syria; consequently, he is now Lord Seabridge, and is expected to arrive shortly at home. By-the-bye," added Alfred, with assumed *nonchalance*, "is not the Manby staying with the Lymingtons? Rather awkward if she should meet her discarded lover!"

Alfred cautiously watched his cousin's countenance as he uttered this remark, and he immediately perceived that it would be no difficult matter at once to strike upon a chord the most susceptible in the human frame. More might be effected by exciting his cousin's jealousy than by every other argument or persuasion.

Evidently much piqued by Alfred's question, Herbert demanded if Lord Seabridge was immediately expected.

"I believe, every hour," rejoined his cousin: "a messenger was despatched for him from the Foreign Office. And, in fact, Herbert, were any other man's happiness at stake

but yours, I should really wish Miss Manby would consent to marry Henry, whose attachment to her is, I know, unabated: he would marry her at once, even were Lord Lymington as much opposed to the match as he is anxious for its taking place."

"Do you think it probable?" demanded Herbert; "and why should she not? I have no claim! I have not—have not dared to declare myself. Be it so," added he with great emotion; "I could submit, though my heart burst, if her happiness could be insured by the sacrifice of mine."

"It will be your own fault, Herbert," rejoined Alfred, "if it does take place; and really, as matters stand, I should not be surprised. Compare his previous offer, his subsequent constancy, his prospect of a peerage, and, above all, the united efforts and persuasions of Lady Lymington and Mrs. Walden, with your absolute silence,—nay, indeed, your want of energy, and the decided opposition of your father, and then judge if there would be

any thing marvellous in her consenting at last to prefer the substance to the shadow. I think, without joking, Berty, that she has given you ample time to consider."

Satisfied with the evident impression that this new argument had made on his cousin's mind, Alfred now artfully turned the conversation on indifferent matters until they reached the house, where the one retired to his room to enjoy by anticipation the fruits of his detestable machinations, and the other to ponder over his own melancholy and conflicting sentiments.

Herbert's first impulse was to have hastened to his mother, declared his determination, and then to have thrown himself at Miss Manby's feet; but after a severe conflict between love, jealousy, and filial duty, the latter prevailed, and he resolved firmly to await his father's return. In the course of two or three days, during which Alfred lost no opportunity of increasing the painful perplexities of Herbert's mind, the cousins quitted Milton Park

on their proposed tour. It was their intention to pass the night at the house of a gentleman near Ilfracombe, and thence to cross the Bristol Channel on their way to Glynn Castle.

CHAPTER IV.

THE individual whom they intended to visit on their way, was a Mr. Godfrey Botts; a man who presented an extraordinary instance of the lavish extravagance with which Fortune now and then showers down her gifts with a blind and indiscriminate profusion on her favourites. Mr. Botts was connected with many of the most influential and wealthy persons in the country, but he was the youngest son of a poor man, with a numerous and unprovided family. His education had, in the first instance, been much neglected; and from constant association with low people, he acquired a vulgarity of accent and manner which never forsook him. At the same time, he was shrewd, cunning, sharp, and selfish, to the highest degree, and he had, moreover, the

admirable faculty of being able to generate eighteen pence out of a shilling.

At the age of sixteen, an opportunity having presented itself, he was removed from his village associates, despatched to London, and articled to an eminent solicitor in Chancery-lane, for which profession his father perceived that he had all the necessary qualifications, save that of writing a good hand. In a shorter space of time than could have been hoped, the dawn of his fortune commenced. He became senior clerk, then junior partner, and at last absolute proprietor of the whole house, which brought him an immense and perpetually increasing income. This rapid advance had been, however, in a great measure attributed to collateral circumstances. Whilst yet in a subordinate situation, he had succeeded in making an impression on the heart of a city heiress, whom he married in despite of the threats of her father, who, to the no small joy of Botts, suddenly dropped down in an apoplectic fit, brought on by

rage and vexation, and died ere he could sign the deed by which he intended to cut off his disobedient daughter with a shilling. By this visitation of Providence, Mrs. Botts became sole inheritrix of sixty thousand pounds, which she was induced to settle on her husband before her death, an event which occurred in her first confinement. Scarcely had the gloss disappeared from the black which marked the husband's loss, when Fortune again chose him as the object of her favours, through the medium of the widow of a most wealthy conveyancer, some years older than himself; who, ere six months from the demise of his first wife, threw herself into his arms, and with it a sum exceeding one hundred and forty thousand pounds, in stock, bonds, and securities, including a large share in one of the most flourishing houses in the city. This lady was the present Mrs. Botts. Having, through the present amalgamation of law and matrimony, realized an income of nearly fifteen thousand a-year, Mr. Botts determined,

as far as outward appearances went, to relinquish his business in Chancery Lane to his two elder sons, and to establish the third in Lombard Street; allowing each a handsome per centage, but still reserving the gross profits to himself. One golden rule he however laid down for them, which consisted in the philanthropic command, that they should, if possible, throw every man, woman, and child into Chancery, "neck and heels," as he called it; and in this they followed his advice, for no solicitors on the rolls had so many clients in that court, where "*Sauve qui peut*" is so necessary a motto.

Having all that he could desire in point of wealth, Godfrey's great ambition was to become a man of fashion, and to emerge from the precincts of Bedford to those of Grosvenor Square, in which laudable desire he was wonderfully encouraged by Mrs., the Misses, and the Master Botts. The first panted to find a few names of rank on her list, the second burned with impatience to go to a charity

ball at least, and the third actually dared to aspire to a stray ticket at the Almack's *mater* herself. To do Botts justice, he had spared no expense in giving to his children a good education, each after its kind. The Misses Botts were "brought up" at a most splendid and fashionable boarding-school, and during the vacation they were attended by the most expensive masters; but, in despite of the graces of Noblet, the sweet notes and skill of Camporese, and the talents of Cramer, they danced as if they had learned of Mr. Jenkins, sung as if they had taken Mr. Sinclair as their model, played as if the instrument had been made of cast-iron, and, in short, looked as if they had been their mother's daughters. The learning of Eton, Westminster, Oxford, and Cambridge, had been put in requisition to furnish the brains of the sons; though they never learned more Latin than to be able to translate the meaning of *capias* or *fieri facias*, or more mathematics, to judge by the stiffness of their persons, than to raise a perpendicular.

Every man, now-a-days, travels, from the grocer to the governor-general—so the Master Bottses were also despatched abroad with the due accompaniments of britckas, couriers, and vocabularies, to polish themselves by descending the crater of Vesuvius, or ascending the glaciers of Mont Blanc. Hence, in due time, they returned, with no other addenda to their merits than a qualification for the Traveller's Club; no other addition to their stores than half-a-dozen shell Cameos, or Mosaics, from Italy; two or three musical snuff-boxes from Geneva; a few iron chains from Berlin; and lithographics from Paris, in their trunks,—together with a rare and heterogeneous jumble of lakes, beccaficci, coliseums, and *frutti de mare*, Raphaels and Heidelberg tuns in their heads, and a nasty poodle at their heels, who performed, of course, the usual evolutions of "*Fait le mort*," "*en faction*," "*Apporti*," and "*saute pour l'Empereur*," and who was, of course, own brother to Munito.

In addition to a large house which Mr. Botts had built, and sumptuously furnished, at the West end of the town, upon the plan of a French hotel, carefully adopting all the inconveniences of that capital, and omitting the comforts of our own; he had also purchased a few hundred acres in his paternal county. There he forthwith proceeded to level hedges, erect lodges, and not only convert the fruitful fields into a park, but moreover to metamorphose a worthy and really picturesque old house into a mishapen, distorted chaos,—having the appearance of a brick and mortar monster, produced by the illegitimate union of Westminster Abbey with his Majesty's Cottage. The regeneration of this anomalous specimen of architectural depravity was celebrated by its being re-baptized, its ancient appellation of Filbert's Holt having given way to the more sonorous title of Hazeldown Hall. Even as Norval "had heard of battles," so the young Bottses had heard of *Battues*, "and they longed to follow to the field some

sturdy keeper." Without any pretensions to a deputation or manor, without even the necessary qualification for shooting, and even without game to preserve, a huge six-foot Caliban keeper was sent for from Norfolk. In a suit of green and gold, with a double detonater in his hand, and attended by the young Esquires with their Purdy's, this worthy soon became the terror of every black-bird, tame cat, stray dog, and sparrow in the parish. It was a mere trifle that the game-keeper should continue the live-long year in all the vacancy of solitude, since the walls of the adjacent barns gave ample proofs of his animosity to vermin; there being, in fact, more hedge-hogs than hares, more owls than pheasants, more pole-cats than partridges, within his jurisdiction.

The families with whom Mr. Botts was connected in the county were people of the most refined and gentlemanly manners, cultivated education, and universal popularity; being as much looked up to by their neighbours as they

were admired in the society in which they moved in London. In possession of old hereditary properties, they were dignified without pride, hospitable without pomp. Civil, obliging, and unaffected, they were without ostentation themselves, and detested it in others; consequently the purse-proud vanity of Mr. Botts, only to be exceeded by the ostentatious vulgarity of his wife, the *minauderie* and conceit of his daughters, or the disgusting dandyism of the sons, soon had the effect of alienating not only his connexions, but almost every other family of distinction in the county. The beauties of Hazeldown Hall might, in short, have been lost to the world, had not the Bottses laid violent hands upon people from London, with whom, of course, they vented all the spleen, rancour, jealousy, and heart-burnings which the coolness of their neighbours had given rise to. Not content with appearing at the Races, County meetings, and Assizes, with more lace on his liveries, and more horses to his carriages than the Lord

Lieutenant, he had lately made an attempt to carry a neighbouring borough against the interest and politics of his connexion, and the sense of the whole county. This attempt was made under the banners of independence, civil and religious reform in parliament, and a string of other excellent reasons equally salutary in fact, as they were misunderstood and disregarded by him: for he cared not a straw for the Pope or Martin Luther, the Mass or the Sacrament; he scarcely understood the real meaning of Whig or Tory, and would as gladly have jumped into a rotten borough as any one of the most shackled members in the House. In addition to 20,000*l.*, this election, or rather rejection, had cost him the good-will of the whole county, as he had resolved to keep the poll open to the last minute for the vexatious purpose of creating expense and trouble to his adversaries; so, in fact, at the time we allude to, he found it a difficult matter to assemble a party to meet the young men.

Alfred Milton's affairs had been for some years managed by Botts, and it was through the intimacy of one of the sons with the chief clerk in the house of Sir Herbert's solicitor, that Alfred, unknown to the principal, a most respectable man, had obtained possession of his uncle's papers, upon which all his villainous hopes were built. In return for this important service, Alfred had exerted himself in an unusual degree to bring the Bottses into fashion; but the vulgarity, conceit, and overdone show of the whole tribe, baffled even his powerful efforts. Their balls were attended by no people of rank save a few patronizing dowagers, omitted elsewhere, or half-a-dozen foreign counts not yet initiated in London life; whilst their oft-repeated dinners were devoured by a few young Guardsmen, who would have broken bread with Beelzebub himself; or a few fat client county members, who lodged at the Hummums, and ran up for a call of the House. It is true, in the Park and at the Opera the Bottses

shone conspicuous ; for the sons and daughters had some of the neatest hacks in London, and the mother one of the best boxes, which her husband had received as part payment of a professional bill. But, *heu miserum*, thus far they went and no farther. The ladder of fashion slipped through their fingers as if it had been the "*Mat de Cocagne*," Almack's rejected them *nem. diss.*, and the French play merely took pity upon them, when nearly at its last gasp, and that only when its benches were thinned by some brilliant fête elsewhere. Certainly, had they travelled, they were presentable at Bruxelles or Florence, for they had been at court ; and now-a-days, who has not ?

"Vestly delighted to see you at my house, Mr. Milton ; iss indeed, vestly good of you to think of us in our pestorels !" exclaimed Mrs. Botts, as Alfred, upon entering the drawing room at Hazeldown, presented his cousin to the lady of the mansion. "Enchanted to have the honour of receiving Colonel Milton

at Hezledown Hall!" which latter word Mrs. Botts pronounced so as to give it a very equivocal signification. "None the worse for your stebs, I hope—iss indeed, immensely unpleasing to be stuck in the back by moonlight. Bedly lighted, Lisbon, I suppose—no Bow-street petrole—no gess." Then turning to her daughters, before Herbert had time to reply, she added, "Colonel Milton—my daughters! Lucy, my first—Colonel Milton! Colonel Milton—Emma, my second!—Sophy, my third—Colonel Milton!"

Herbert bowed, and the young ladies simultaneously smirked and bobbed with an affectation of ease and *nonchalance*, which was not lost upon the visitors.

Whilst one eyed him through her glass, another whispered audibly, "Something immensely aristocratic in his exterior."

"Oh! quite an Almack's man, I assure you; a sort of *né elect* on every list."

"I always met him there," replied a Mr. Basinville, to whom the remark was ad-

dressed, and with whom Herbert was slightly acquainted.

"Something extremely Titiany about his head," said another Miss Botts.

"Quite in the *clair obscur* of Murillo," rejoined the third.

After ordering a profusion of unnecessary refreshments, a huge gong having been clanged above twenty minutes to proclaim the dressing-hour, Mrs. Botts apologized for her husband's absence. "Iss, he is merely jist gone round the skirts of my domeen," said the lady, "with Russel, Hampden, and Sidney, my keepers, and my nightmen, to drive in the game, as there is to be a grend *baityou* in the morning."

And indeed, before Herbert could precisely discover whom or what she meant, an uproar in the hall was heard, and in walked the Squire and his three sons, in their shooting costume, amidst whistlings and roarings of "Hark, back Dash, Fan!" "Get out, you Don!" "Go to the Devil, Carlo!" "Kennel,

you beast Ponto!" from the juvenile trio,—
"Mind my Ottomans, with your *igh* lows,"
from the father—"You'll dirty my *cote pali*
merino," from the mamma—and, "Are you
certain they are not mad?" from the daugh-
ters; who, affecting to be dreadfully alarmed,
had all huddled behind Mr. Basinville, who,
in his turn, endeavoured to re-assure them,
by saying, "You need not be in the least
alarmed, I know one of the Patronesses
of Almack's who always sleeps with an
immense poodle in her room!"

As soon as the ill-broken and worse bred
curs were dismissed the house, Mr. Botts
corroborated his wife's information, adding,
"We'll shew some rare sport to-morrow—the
best covers—sure to find something, though
the keepers says it has been a bad breeding
season."

"We have been more fortunate at Milton,"
replied Herbert; "the game there never was
more plentiful. Alfred and I bagged five
hundred head in a few days."

"Five hundred heads!" simpered Miss Lucy; "quite *à la Turque à la Sublime Porte!*"

"Port!" retorted Mrs. Botts; "parcel of stuff! the keeper says it all along of the rain."

"The fact is, I believe," said Herbert, restraining his laughter, "that the covers at Milton have not been disturbed for three or four years."

"Why, then, what the dickens is the use of the covers, then?" rejoined the host. "Why Lord bless you! we've a *batter* here almost every day."

"Battue, Pepay," whispered Miss Lucy.

"Yes, father," added one of the sons, "and pray how many blank days have we had?"

"You may rely upon it," observed Alfred, with extreme gravity, "that Mr. Botts is quite right;—nothing can be more detrimental than leaving too much game at the end of the season: in the first place, the old birds are apt to drive away the young; and in the next, the hen pheasants, in the course of five

or six years, become mules, and assume the plumage of the male."

To this simple and well-known fact, Botts replied with an air of incredulity, whilst the tongues of the sons were thrust into their cheeks.

"I'cod! I should just as soon a thought of Mrs. Botts being turned into a zebra, and putting on my yeomanry cap and feathers."

"You're coarse, Godfrey Botts!" exclaimed the lady, with an angry look; whilst one of the travelled sons observed,

"I can easily fancy it, Sir, for in France they gave us cocks' eggs for breakfast!"

"*Œufs à la coque*, you booby!" said the sister.

While another added, "Quite in the spirit of the *Metempsychosis*:" and the third exclaimed, "Rather, my dear, in that of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*."

"His *Art of Love*, Miss Botts," whispered Alfred, almost bursting with laughter, though with a grave face, and a sigh which might

have extinguished a flambeau, "his Art of Love is written there," pointing to her black eyes.

Miss Botts returned this compliment with a smile, and then affected to twinkle the said eyes, as if confused and downcast.

It being now time to retire for dressing, the party separated to their apartments, Mr. Basinville exclaiming, as they left the room,

"Exactly what I told you! complete Almack's men. Oh! you can tell any of us a mile off."

Herbert was ushered by his host into the apartment, majestically called the state-room, in that part of the building yclept the Bachelor's Bower, by Miss Botts, in opposition to another corridor destined for the ladies, which went by the appellation of the Maiden's Alcove. His attention was particularly drawn by his host to the various luxuries and comforts which filled the chamber.

"My wife has done it, han't she, Colonel? Here's a lot of this here jimcracks," exclaim-

ed the guide, pointing to the different, almost essential accessories to a modern man's toilette: "she says no one can't do without 'em! i'cod, I have though, all my life."

"Nasty fellow!" thought Herbert to himself.

"I never wanted none of 'em; all stuff, all finery, all Betty Martin! Why, I can put my dressing things in a nut-shell: I can dress myself any time in three minutes!"

"Beast!" thought the guest.

"One, two, three, crack with a razor, and all's right! But, I suppose, Colonel, you're like my son Sidney, who says no gentleman can put on his neck-hankecher, without risking failures, under twenty minutes. Now, as I said, if a man of business wants all that time to turn out, why there'd be failures enough, I take it;" and then chuckling at his own joke, he retired to, what he called, whisp himself over.

"To do Mr. Doubiggen justice, nothing had been omitted by him which could tend to the

luxury of the inhabitant of this apartment, though Mrs. Botts' ridiculous love of ostentation was visible every where. The bed of polished mahogany, *à la Française en batteau à colonnes dorés*, was almost concealed by a coverlet of purple silk, fringed with silver, and ornamented in its centre with the Botts' arms. The curtains, of the same colour and material, lined with *ponceau*, and surmounted by a plume of black feathers, from the centre of which peeped the family crest, a full moon, with the motto, "*Nihil Sibi!*" The wardrobes, comodes, and secretary, corresponded with the bed, glittering in all the pride of *or-molu* and varnish. The dressing-table, with its cover bordered with lace, and collected round the looking-glass by *bouquets* of purple and *ponceau* ribbons, was strewn with sundry richly cut glass *façons* filled with rose, elder, and *Cologne* water. In the centre of the room was placed a rosewood table, bearing the necessary apparatus for writing, consisting of a sumptuously bound blotting-book, every

species of coloured paper embossed with Cupids, hearts, and flowers; perfumed sealing-wax; cameo wafers; gold sand; green tapers, in mother-of-pearl candlesticks; and bunches of seals engraved with "*Hazledown Hall*," or tender mottos. Near that stood a *chaise longue*, with a reading-stand affixed, on which reposed a huge volume of an illuminated Bible; whilst a small book-case, on either side the door, was filled with Walter Scott, Byron, and Moore. The implements dedicated to ablution were of the most splendid Worcester porcelain, of every possible shape and contrivance, attended by the most costly crystal goblets and decanters, and surrounded with a profusion of almond-paste, herriion-powder, and scented wash-balls; not to forget a huge pile of towels, which might have served a moderately clean German Baron for two years at least; and a *psyche* swinging in a corner, in which the son of Gaunt might have admired himself at full length. In short, from the superfluous silver kettle of hot water down to

the necessary boot-jack, which, by-the-bye, was so constructed as almost to draw off the patient's boot, as if one had been a needle and the other a loadstone, no item was omitted which could add to the splendid comfort of the guest, or exhibit Mrs. Botts' magnificence.

In despite of the velocity with which the host boasted of performing the process of "cleaning himself," Herbert had full time to complete his toilette, and to descend ere any of the party, which gave him a few minutes to examine the suite of drawing, eating, and billiard-rooms, the library, boudoir, and conservatory, which were all open, and lighted up in the most splendid manner. The furniture, new, gaudy, and expensive, glittered with gold and silver, silk and damask. *Or-molu* branches, china, alabaster vases, buhl clocks, marquetrie cabinets, and plate-glass skreens, were crowded one upon another, with all the profusion of Mr. Jarman's shop, but without a particle of his taste. Books, prints, and

the most gorgeously bound albums, strewed the tables: the walls were hidden by a quantity of vile crusts, in splendid frames, libelling the glorious names of Titian, Rembrandt, or Correggio: here and there, interspersed with faces of the Bottses, which had defied the magic pencil of Lawrence to give to them a single particle of grace or gentility. But the most striking picture was an immense family group, occupying half a rood of canvass. This composition, emanating from the classic heads of the Messrs. Botts, represented Mrs. Botts as Britannia, crowning with laurels her husband, in the uniform of the City Horse. The right was occupied by the daughters, as Graces, scattering flowers around their brothers, who were disguised as Mars, Mercury, and Apollo. The foreground was filled with various characteristic attributes, such as lyres, scales, and armour; whilst the distance portrayed the defeat of the Spanish Armada, allegorically introduced to remind the spectator of the Boulogne flotilla, frightened into

fits, at the bare idea of Botts' volunteer prowess.

In a few minutes, the party, augmented by the addition of some new faces, were assembled, and Herbert was in due form presented to each in succession. Among these was a Lady Snapsop, widow of a gentleman who had obtained the honour of knighthood by standing proxy for some general in the Peninsula or India. A Miss Pottle, sister to a baronet; a Mr. and Mrs. Skrewford, of the same stamp and class as their host; their daughter, an affected, over-dressed minx, loaded with beads and garlands; an old colonel on half-pay, who had been placed on the shelf since the campaigns in Flanders; a sporting clergyman, called Parson Squirt; a young recruiting officer; a Mr. Wrangle, the senior partner in Sidney Botts' house, a violent and overbearing reformer; together with one or two young law friends of the host's sons who stood with their thumbs in their fobs, and their necks horridly stiff, examining

two such luminaries of fashion, as Alfred and his cousin in the *Gords*. The operation of precedence being arranged, Botts walked off with Lady Snapsop, and hinted to Herbert to conduct Miss Pottle. Though this doughty affair had cost the family a world of debate, as to the relative rights of the Knight's widow, and the Baronet's daughter; the old Colonel of the line on half-pay, and the young Colonel of the Guards on full pay; Herbert, however, modestly declined the proffered honour in favour of the old warrior (who upon this occasion appeared much more anxious to advance, than he had been in the Low Countries), and offering his arm to one of the young ladies, they entered the dining-room. Here every thing was in unison with the rest of the house; expense, show, and ostentation, without neatness or taste: seven or eight ill-drilled, but gaudily-dressed servants, of all sizes and professions, ran jostling against each other, with shoes creaking like a French preserve of frogs, clattering the plates, and

rattling the forks with the noise of climbing boys on a May-day ;—the one scarifying the ear of a guest by presenting a knife on the right side, and another spoiling a coat, by carelessly withdrawing a dish on the left. The table, apeing the modern fashion, was round, and groaned beneath a superfluous exuberance of dishes, which were evidently the production of a cook, whose degrees had been taken at the City Tavern ; Grease, Cayenne pepper and Harvey, being the basis of every sauce. The wines were of every denomination, infinite in number, execrable in quality. The Champagne, sweet to mawkishness, fizzed and squibbed about the room, and was only prevented from administering the *douche* to the guests by the tawny thumb of the perspiring butler. The port was hot as molten lead, and might have been adopted in the defence of some ancient gateway. The hock, warm in temperature and sour in taste. The claret, thin, flavourless and anti-sto-

machic ; whilst a Burton farmer might have mistaken the strong home-brewed for indifferent small-beer. The plate was massive, but badly cleaned ; the porcelain covered with gilding, but out of all keeping ; the glass costly, but dull and finger-marked : whilst Mrs. Botts was perpetually venting her anger on the awkward servants, who, in despite of written bills of fare and housekeeper's lectures, persisted in disarranging the order of the viands : a heavy *vol au vent* being seen arm-in-arm with a dish of drooping patties ; or a plate of fat veal cutlets sidling with an "idem" of pork ; or, perhaps, two *entréments* making their appearance in lieu of the previous *entrées*.

"Have you heard who are to be the new patronesses at Almack's next season ?" asked Mr. Basinville, a gentleman, by-the-bye, who, from some particular commercial connexion with Russia, had obtained two subscriptions before Easter, and consequently felt ashamed

of business, and could neither think nor converse on any other subject than lords, ladies, and Willis's rooms.

“No : indeed, I have been so short a time in England, that I have not yet given that important matter a thought ; besides, I so little care what despotic, impertinent woman fills the vacant place of another,” replied Herbert, “that I am indifferent about it.”

“Good God !” retorted Mr. Basinville, lifting up his eyebrows ; “not care about the patronesses ? I never should have expected such an answer from an Almack's man. Important ! you may, indeed, say so—twenty-three votes in the House of Commons, certain at present. Lord Tapwell told Lord Axminster, who informed Sir Harry Start, from whom I had it, that a change in the ministry must take place, if they can get rid of Lady Rollington, who carries seven votes on her list, and introduces a Whig into her place on the committee. No ministry can stand them. Heavens ! not care for Almack's ! when, perhaps, the

fate of nations, the interest of commerce, and the weal of the constitution, depend on their exertions !”

Herbert could hardly forbear laughing at this new view which Mr. Basinville had taken of their Ladyships, who were, perhaps, little aware that their efforts to promote absolutism in private life, were looked upon by political economists as the means of propagating public liberty.

“Don’t talk to me of constitutions, Sir; the constitution is a farce! What benefit will the country derive from a change of ministers?” exclaimed Mr. Wrangle: “one minister in a fortnight will be as bad as his predecessor. Will a new one relieve the people from the weight of those taxes which are grinding this once free and happy people to the very dust? Will the poor man eat his bread cheaper? Will a cypher be struck off from our national debt? No, Sir; whilst we are devoured by placemen, pensioners, and courtiers, our manufacturing population is starving; our agri-

cultural interest is on the brink of ruin ; our commerce is perishing by inches ; and we are at the threshold of universal bankruptcy ! There is no salvation, no means of preserving us from destruction but by a complete reform in Parliament : the disfranchisement of rotten boroughs, a fair and equal representation of the people, and the abolition of a standing army !”

“ Not a word, Sir, against the army, I beg,” said the veteran, taking courage when he counted heads ; “ we are three of us here.”

“ No man has a greater respect for the military than myself, when properly called upon to act by the civil power ; but in the heart of peace, why should we feed on dry bread to fill with beef the mouths of the soldiery, for no other purpose, Sir, than to gag the people, knock the citizens off the pavement, or make old women take off their pattens. I should like to see them treat me so. By heavens ! if there remained a spark of the spirit of Boadicea in my veins, if I were a woman—”

"You would probably wear thick shoes," exclaimed Alfred, laughing, "to spite them!"

"No, Sir; I would resist; I'd petition the Commons' House—it's flagrant despotism to arrest the King's subjects, and undress them on the highway—it's an assault—it's part of that universal conspiracy levelled against all nations by their rulers!"

"I do not think your action for battery would lay," exclaimed the elder Master Botts: "though if it's a conspiracy, I take it you might move to shew cause; but common law's a ticklish thing—"

"Law, Sir! Don't tell me of law—there is no justice, I say, in maintaining such an armed force. I would not have a soldier, Sir, seen from John-o'-Groat's house to the Land's End."

"No soldiers!" exclaimed Miss Skrewford, in a sentimental voice. "How shocking! how horrid Brighton balls would be without some of the dear Lancers or Hussars!"

‘ We never went to the balls there,” replied Miss Botts, with rather an air of contempt. “ Mamma wished us not to increase our acquaintance at watering-places, one meets with such very vulgar people : but I do think a fancy ball at Almack’s would be detestable without the sweet *Gords*.”

“ Yes, indeed,” said Mr. Basinville, “ they are all Almack’s men. I remember, in the second subscription of the first set, seeing four Colonels dancing with as many Peers’ daughters, friends of mine : it was quite the sort of thing which one could see no where else. You never, I suppose, were on any list, were you ?” said he, turning to the veteran, who was in the middle of a long story about the campaigns in Flanders.

“ Since the year Ninety-six, Sir,” rejoined the soldier, “ I have been on the half-pay list five times, Sir ; I was once on the sick list, and once, Sir, on the list of killed and wounded. I am surprised, Sir, at such a question to so old an officer !”

“ Oh ! dear Sir, I meant, if ever you were at Almack's.”

“ No, Sir ; nor do I remember hearing of such a place in the Low Countries.”

“ Low !” exclaimed Basinville. “ Gracious powers ! low ! none but Princes, Dukes, Counts, Marquesses, Mesdames, Messieurs, and Mademoiselles, as the ‘ Post ’ has it ; for we do not give military rank there—we drop the rank.”

“ What without the ceremony of a court-martial !” rejoined the officer ; who, from having been past over in every brevet since Ninety-six, was in no small degree irritable on this point. “ Drop a man's rank without rhyme or reason—it's shameful ! Why, Sir, if I had not been past over in the most unjust manner, I should now, most probably, have been commanding the army in Spain. But, Sir, merit is no claim in our service ; interest and connexion is every thing.”

“ I think you do the Commander-in-chief injustice,” answered Herbert. “ It is, I

believe, the universal opinion of the army, that it would be impossible for any man to act with greater impartiality and regard to merit. Some exceptions may occur, but these are generally understood to be forced upon him by the highest authority, at the suggestion or entreaty of others ; besides, Sir, the commander in Spain, Lord Wellington—”

“Wellesley !” roared out the testy old veteran ; “a boy, Sir ! What service has he seen ? I was senior Major of my regiment before he left school ; what merit has he ?”

“Very trifling, indeed,” answered Herbert, “merely leading his men from one victory to another, and making our red jackets as much respected on land, as our blue ones are on the ocean. We had the honour of being often pretty near him,” continued Herbert ; “and God send England a succession of such boys, is all I pray !”

“Oh, but I shall hate him,” exclaimed Miss Emma Botts, “for having made the dear

Gords fight. It was not real fighting, was it? that would be too barbarous."

"The Guards, the Guards!" responded the officer; "yes, the gentlemen's sons, as they were called, were always petted and coaxed like spoiled children. I remember in Ninety-six—"

"That you saw very little of the Guards," replied Herbert significantly. The good-natured Miss Pottle having already apprised him of the Lieutenant-colonel being suddenly seized with a dislike to the sight of blood, at the moment that the sacrifice perhaps of a portion of his own was particularly necessary.

"I do not care, Sir; I hate them, I detest them, collectively—no offence to you, Sir," retorted the old soldier, in a passion.

"I am very sorry we should have incurred your dislike, my dear Sir," rejoined Herbert: "but I really do not understand the motives of your hatred to a corps who never can have interfered with your promotion; and who,

indeed, now possess no other advantage, than an exemption from Colonial service."

"And why are they not sent to broil there? Why should we of the line—?"

"Be the only people destined to cross it, I suppose you were going to add?" rejoined Herbert, smiling. This answer completely cut short the testy old veteran in his tirade, though Mr. Wrangle immediately exclaimed, "Guards, Sir! who ever heard of guards, Sir, in a free country. It may be, as matters stand, constitutional, but it was evidently an omission and oversight in the charter; it never could have been intended. The King—if we must have a king—should be guarded by the love of a free people; the crown, Sir, if crown we must have, should be protected by an equal representation of uncorrupt members, not by a parcel of fellows with hairy caps on their heads. 'The prosperity of a country,' says Fox—"

"Country for foxes! I knows of a country where there's more nor seven or eight litters

of as fine cubs as ever you clapped eyes on!" exclaimed the sporting clergyman, who hating politics most cordially, paid no sort of attention hitherto to what was going on.

The Rev. Simon Squirt, who went by the name of "Chaplain to the Brush," was one of those strange and anomalous beings of whom, perhaps, he was the only remaining specimen. A compound of Squire Western and Parson Andrews. His whole life since he quitted the university had been passed in field-sports; every moment he could steal from the calls of his profession, was dedicated to his favourite amusement; and yet it is singular to say, he performed its duties strictly, according to the Rubric, though much in the style he rode across country, and few men could beat him at that. He was well known and well received at every house within a circle of fifty miles, where a bed and a bottle of port always welcomed him. He knew every horse in the province, how and where it was bred, and the feats it had performed; he could distinguish

the voices of every dog in the packs of three counties, as well as the huntsmen themselves; and he was acquainted with every fox and litter of cubs throughout the different covers of as many hunts, as if the animals had been merely tame rabbits. His winters were passed in hunting, except during the frosts; when, with the industry of the ant, he would shut himself up, and write sermons. His autumns were occupied in shooting, and his summers in fishing; whilst what he termed the dead months of spring were well employed in breaking dogs, making nets, and white-washing his stables and kennels. At the age of sixty he could ride as fast and as fearlessly as the best of the young ones: and it was proverbial, that where the chaplain shook his head and swerved, the most desperate steeple-hunter would not venture. He could break a dog, with any man in England, and his breed of setters and pointers were eagerly sought for; whilst few birds ever escaped his deadly single-barrel—a sort of tool which

a modern sportsman would scarcely have ventured to fire without a fuse. His skill in killing a trout rendered him equal to Izaak Walton himself: indeed, the quaint old fisherman might have been rendered jealous by the beauty and perfection of the chaplain's home-made collection of flies. To add to these essential qualifications, he was an experienced farrier and dog doctor; winning all the young squires' hearts by getting their nags into condition, and carrying off the hearts of their aunts and mothers, by curing their sick lap-dogs of the distemper. He contrived to dispose of the operations of marrying, christening, and burying, perfectly to the satisfaction of his parishioners, without allowing them to interfere with his favourite amusements. He had been frequently known to refuse any fees from an anxious couple, if they would consent to be married by candle-light on a fine scenting morning; he would make a present of a bag full of game to the parents of a child to postpone a christening

until a frost; and although he had not the power to arrestt he fatal shaft, yet he often contrived to induce the relations of a deceased parishioner to put the funeral off until Sunday, which he termed killing a double-shot. He was at the same time a man of benevolent heart and universal charity, in which amiable indulgence he was enabled to enjoy his generous propensities freely, having inherited a very comfortable fortune, and having neither wife, child, kith or kindred. His education had been excellent; few men were better scholars: he had obtained as many honours at the university as he had carried off brushes in the field; yet, from living for nearly forty years in the country, he had acquired a provincial accent which gave him to a stranger an air of vulgarity and coarseness. His conversation was a curious mixture of good sense and slang, delivered in the accent of a ploughboy. In fact, he was a compound of benevolence and levity, vulgarity and classic argument, religion and thoughtlessness ”

The worthy clergyman was about to proceed with his account of his cubs, when Mrs. Botts overpowered his voice, by exclaiming, "My dear Lady Snapsop, you eat nohing! Godfrey Botts, I hope you are taking care of the ladies. Lady Snapsop, let me recommend some of that dish by my husband."

"I thank you, my dear Mrs. Botts," rejoined her Ladyship, who had hitherto taken no share in the conversation, her whole attention being directed towards the dishes, of all of which she had partaken: "no one does the honours so perfectly as my excellent friend. I will trouble Mr. Botts—the least morsel. Every thing in your house, my dear, is in the perfection of cooking; the absolute *je ne sçais quoi*, the North-west passage of culinary superiority."

"My lady," said the host, as he put an immense morsel on a plate, drowning it with greasy sauce, "I have helped you as I love you,—it's *fregander*, I believe."

"Gracious, Pa!" said Miss Lucy; "*fricandeau*, you mean."

"Then why do you write the bill of fare in such a cursed, crabbed, finniken hand," answered the parent angrily.

"Lord, Pepay!" said Miss Lucy, "you are so immensely unpologlotical."

"That's not at all singular, my good friend," observed Mr. Basinville: "I know one of the Patronesses of Almack's, whose mistakes in French are extremely pleasing, quite original; the sort of thing one could meet with nowhere else."

In the mean time, Mrs. Botts had replied to the widow's compliments, by saying, "You're vestly obliging; iss indeed it's so like you; but it is, in fect, my object, that every thing in my house, my cook, my kitchen, my confectionary, my dinners, my desserts, in short, all my little unaffected domestic concerns, should be simple, neat, and unassuming."

"I never saw such unity, such good taste, such a unique *ensemble*," rejoined her toady-

ing friend: "but, indeed," added she with a sigh, and a look directed at Herbert, whilst she devoured the last remnant of the mess before her; "I wish I was in better spirits to do justice to the talents of your cook; the sight of the Colonel from Spain has rather shocked me."

"Talking of Spain," said Mr. Basinville, "that puts me in mind of a scene I saw at Almack's. I was standing by one of the Patronesses, admiring Miss Manby's dancing.—" The colour flew into Herbert's face.—"Who should come up to her," continued Mr. Basinville, "but the Duchess of Northfleet; let me see, no, it was the Marchioness of Smallberry. 'You have heard the news,' says she—I only overheard the words, 'Spain,—and dead of his wounds,—' when crack, in the middle of a *chassez*, down falls Miss Manby in a fainting fit."

Herbert's confusion and annoyance now became extremely painful; and he feared lest the eyes of every person in the room should

be directed towards him. These sensations were, however, in some degree diminished, by Miss Botts exclaiming,

“What horrid affectation! don't you think so, Colonel Milton? I dare say she pretended to be in love with the dead man,—do you know him?”

“A little,” replied Herbert, disgusted with the impertinence of his interlocutor.

“Do you think her handsome?—I know she is all the fashion,” continued the young lady, “but I think she is dreadfully proud and conceited.”

“Do you know her well enough,” rejoined Herbert, “to judge of her disposition?”

“Certainly!” answered Miss Botts: “we saw her every night with some old woman at the Opera.”

“An admirable way,” replied Herbert, smiling, “of forming an opinion of any one's temper or disposition. I think, if you knew her better, that you would judge differently of her; at least, from what I have heard.”

"I should be inclined to agree with you, Colonel," said Mr. Basinville: "for when she fainted, two Patronesses assisted her across the room, and a third lent her a smelling-bottle; one could not see that sort of thing anywhere else. I assure you, I have a high opinion of her."

Herbert's fair adversary was, however, not to give up her opinion; she therefore again exclaimed, "But I have seen her quite close, and I'm convinced that she does every thing for effect."

"Iss, indeed, to judge by what we once saw in the Park, I should think she was vestly theatrical," said the mamma.

"What happened in the Park?" demanded Herbert, who now perceived that Mr. Basinville had not intended to allude to him as the cause of Emily's fainting.

"Oh," rejoined Miss Lucy, "that is very true, memay; I forgot the Park scene. Why, we were all riding with two or three officers in the *Gords*, when Captain Belfont—do

you know him, Colonel Milton?—he's enchanting!"

"Quite so," replied Herbert; who at the same time knew the young man to be the most insufferable, empty-headed coxcomb in the seven battalions.

"Then," continued Miss Lucy, "of course you know his horse, a dear, sweet, long-tailed, strawberry-coloured Arab! It ran away with him, and I thought we should all have fainted."

"Then I may venture to suppose you were all in love with the fugitive, or his horse?" observed Herbert.

All the Misses Botts blushed, and for a moment looked very silly, when the eldest, resuming her courage, replied, "It was so awful! so many persons on foot and on horseback, he might have been hurt; but I am happy to say, *nous en etions quitte pour la peur*, as he merely knocked down an old crippled soldier, and broke the man's leg."

"Quite a trifle," replied Herbert, with dis-

gust, "and an excellent proof of Miss Manby's affectation."

"Oh! but you don't let me finish," answered the invincible Miss: "for only conceive Miss Manby, who was walking near the spot, running across the road, and not only actually endeavouring to assist the beggar-man, who was crying about his orphan children, and all those sort of cant exclamations, but positively ordering him to be carried, with all his screaming brats, into her own house, in Park-lane, where, I understood, he was taken care of, and cured at her expense. Oh! and I quite forgot, that she herself positively carried a dirty little beast of a child, which had fallen from the beggar's arms, across the road!"

"And God reward her for her goodness!" exclaimed the clergyman. "I love the vixen, I do. I'cod! she shall have the prettiest pup o'my next litter o' Blenheim; and there is no truer breed in England. What day o' the year, ma'am, was it? for if so be

as it's trout season, I'll send her a pair of ten pounders every anniversary."

"A soldier's daughter never deserts a soldier in distress," said the veteran. "For I remember in the Low Countries in Ninety-six—"

"I am in love with her already!" exclaimed the young officer, interrupting his prosy senior; "she must be an angel! If I could get leave I'd go up to town, were it only to look at her."

Herbert concealed, as much as possible the emotion he felt at this trait of benevolence on the part of Emily, as well as his disgust at the unfeeling manner of Miss Botts; who he saw was sufficiently mortified by the silence which reigned around, as no one but Lady Snapsop appeared to countenance or approve Miss Lucy's opinions. Her Ladyship, who from sheer toadyism had agreed upon the point of Emily's affectation, whispered to her hostess, "I never see any one from Spain without being dreadfully overcome: it re-

minds me so cruelly of the glorious occasion on which my Sir Carnaby was elevated."

"To prevent your being depressed," said the host, "suppose, my Lady, we drink a glass of wine—Champagne or hock?"

"Not ock, thank you; it's eating," rejoined the widow: "I'll take port."

"Where do you get these rolls made?" demanded Mrs. Skrewford of the hostess: "they are quite *luscious*, quite *à la Française*."

"I suppose," replied Mrs. Botts, "they are made by my house-baker: Iss, indeed, I'm vestly pleased you like them: you're such an admirable jidge!"

This remark, innocently intended as a compliment, was received with a look and a gulp of extreme anger, by Mrs. Skrewford, whose father had been a large wholesale biscuit-dealer.

The lady of the house, not perceiving her friend's anger, continued, "I will direct my butler, to tell my housekeeper, to order my

baker, to give you the receipt, and then you can have them made at home."

This last observation completely overcame Mrs. Skrewford's last particle of control over her temper, and she flung out, "Mem! you're immensely kind; but, I assure you, my family have left off baking quite as long as your's have left off brewing: and there's no wonder, Mem, that your bread rises so well; you can easily procure yeast!"

This retort was meant to allude to Mrs. Bott's paternal family, whose fortune had been acquired through the assistance of a large brewery.

Before Mrs. Botts had time to reply, Mr. Basinville whispered to Mrs. Skrewford, "Lord, madam, I assure you, there is not the slightest reason for feeling annoyed. I was dining this year with a Member of the Upper House; where, by-the-bye, I was the only Commoner; nothing but Lords: we were to go to Almack's afterwards. There happened to be some sponge biscuits at the dessert:

‘They are excellent!’ said the Marchioness of Smallberry, who was sitting by me, to our hostess: ‘admirable! Can I have the receipt? I think those our man-cook makes disagree with my Italian greyhounds.’ ‘Too heavy, my dear Marchioness,’ replied the Countess, who, by-the-bye, is a Patroness,—I was on her list: ‘Too heavy probably. Let our *maître d’hôtel* send you some of these as an *essaye*. My poodle eats four dozen every day, and has never had a moment’s illness.’”

Alfred, who had also his private reasons for standing well with the Bottses, endeavoured to appease the gathering storm, which otherwise he would have been enchanted to have fomented into a hurricane. “What I admire most at Hazledown,” said he to Mrs. Botts, “is the simplicity and ease with which every thing is done; no effort, no useless profusion, no ostentation—perfect, excellent indeed!”

Calmed by this compliment from such a

source, Mrs. Botts made no reply to her dear friend Mrs. Skrewford, merely whispering in Alfred's ear, "Immensely coarse woman, but, poor thing! has lived in no society." Then she continued aloud, "Vestly well-bred of you; iss, indeed, it is exectly as we elways live! We have received you quite *en famille*. Iss, I elways tell my husbend that I will meke no difference in my house! my system is to go on in a plein, unadultereted menner, without any ettempt to overdo the thing!"

"And you succeed most perfectly, my dear madam," rejoined Alfred. "But I suppose, by the excellence of your dinner," of which he had been unable to touch a single *plat*, "that you must have a French cook: of what school is he?"

"If any, of St. Petrick's cherity," rejoined the lady seriously. "But, thenk God! she can neither write nor read; and what's the use of edication to such people?"

"Quite right!" replied Alfred. "If they

are pretty, they do nothing but write love-letters; and if ugly, make out long bills!"

"I am immensely gratified at your agreeing with me. Well, as I was going to say, my cook is, I think, cheap, she gets only a hundred a-year, tea, and washing; my butler, who lived with four successive Lord Meyors, has eighty; my under butler, who is remarkable, as you see, for cleaning plate, forty; and my footmen twenty-eight guineas each, with silk stockings and *bouquets*; therefore, though every thing is on a small scale, yet it goes on well."

As a corroboration of this fact, the coachman, a huge fat monster, covered with tags and lace, unfortunately slipped, in carrying a tray out of the room, and, amidst a horrid din of broken plates, dishes, and butter-boats, fell sprawling into the passage. Mrs. Botts vainly attempted to conceal the agony and annoyance she felt at the sight of her best company Worcester porcelain being destroy-

ed beyond the art of cement or wire to reunite ; nor was her fury a little augmented by the non-appearance of the second course, for which they had been kept waiting nearly three-quarters of an hour.

By way of consolation, the conversation, which had hitherto flowed briskly, now began to flag, and indeed (as is often the case during this disagreeable *hiatus*) a dead silence reigned around, when Miss Pottle, a little, crabbed, ill-natured woman, observed, in a squeaking, shrill voice, " I like much your plan of allowing a short time to elapse between the services ; it affords time for conversation and repose after so many good things."

" It is like a small check after a burst. Gives one time to breathe," said the chaplain ; not intending to offend.

" Yes, indeed," continued Miss Pottle, " it is much better than the absurd and unwholesome system of hurrying the second course into the room, before the first is off the table ; as if one was eating for a wager."

"You are vestly obliging, indeed, Miss Pottle," answered Mrs. Botts; grinning as if she could have eaten her.

"I remember," rejoined the little personage, "the same thing once occurred when I was dining with Prince and Princess Aldorette, at Rome, when Cardinal Lupino whispered in my ear, 'I hope our host has not paid me the same compliment which he did last year.'—'What was it, your eminence?' I said.—'Oh, merely desiring his cook to be assassinated immediately after the first course, to prevent the second being sent up too quickly,' replied the cardinal. His highness knew I liked to take my time."

Mrs. Botts' impatience and choler was rather increased than diminished by this trait of Italian good-breeding, though she was by far too angry to reply, save by a countenance half crying, half laughing,—whilst Mr. Wrangle took the opportunity of exclaiming, "We shall soon have the same thing going on here, unless there is an absolute change in the sys-

tem of representation, no man can call his life, or property, his own, so long as corruption and pensions stalk with horrid strides across our ruined island."

"You are immensely pleasant, indeed!" said Mrs. Botts at last to Miss Pottle; "of course, a true story. I really begin to wish his highness was here."

"Lord, my dear madam!" said the consoling Mr. Basinville; "accidents and delays will occur in the most distinguished circles; for who could have supposed it possible that at such a place as Almack's an interruption should have taken place to the dancing of the second set of quadrilles, for about the same time we have been waiting for the second course?—Collinet having been seized with a fit of sneezing, so as to be utterly unable to apply his flageolet to his lips."

By way of diverting the attention of the party from Mrs. Botts' distress, Herbert good-humouredly pretended to admire a picture

over the fire-place. "A Wouvermans!" said he, "some battle in Flanders."

"Battle in the Low Countries," exclaimed the old Colonel; "what battle? know them all. Let's see, in Ninety-six, it must be that of the 21st of June; we crossed the country, ran them hard, and had a smartish brush."

"A hard run and a brush in Holland!" roared out the Parson, who had not exactly heard the whole phrase. "Mayhap, but not by fair hunting; and Midsummer's Day too, long before the cubs have left the vixen; what savages, with their big breeches, like a rabbit-warren: but to be sure," continued he, "the Lord have mercy on 'em! for people as will shoot foxes, is equal to any wickedness."

"I tell you," rejoined the soldier, "you mistake; we crossed the country by Oudenarde."

"Hould in hard, indeed!" retorted Squirt. "I take it, you must too, or risk sludging up to your neck every minute in one of their ditches. Ride across country there, indeed!"

continued he, with greater energy; "why the Lincolnshire Fens is a Newmarket Heath to it; why there's nought but a frog or a water-rat as could think a going slap an end across such a rascally swamp, if you'd just tould me of zhooting."

"Shooting, Sir! how the devil, saving your presence, could I tell you of that, when you stopped me short before I got to the firing?"

"What, then, you did shoot the fox arter all; for zhame! for zhame! I'd a sooner been zhot myself; I never could a zlept i' my bed arterwards."

"God zounds! Sir, you stop me as short, Sir, as we drove back the *sortie* before Valenciennes, Sir; I tell you, we did not shoot foxes."

"Well, then, that's another matter," replied the indignant Parson, "what did you shoot? Znipes, I take it; for I hear they haven't a pheasant in all the country; all the harrs be mangy, and a rabbit must be as amphiborous as a beaver, if he can find shelter unter

ground ; though, as I've heard say, there's a tidyish sprinkling o' partridge, down about the Polders."

Mrs. Botts, who had been turning her head towards the door, writhing in her chair, looking at all the servants one after the other, with an air of extreme irritation, was in evident disappointment at some dish not appearing in order to fill up the vacuum before her ; she was now heard to mutter between her teeth, " I'll discharge her ! iss, I could knock her down," in reply to the butler's information, that the cook could not send up the *soufflé*, as it would not rise.

" Then," said Mr. Botts, senior, quite callous to his wife's agony, " give her two for one, my dear, or blow her up ; for it's all one in French, Sidney says."

" You're immensely gross, Godfrey Botts," answered the lady, casting a furious look at her grinning husband, though it was only the fear of compromising her dignity before the cousins, that prevented her rushing down-

stairs to put Botts' vulgar joke into effect. It appeared, however, that the corresponding dish on the other side had succeeded better, as Botts, after examining the contents of the little silver trays, exclaimed,

"Something with cheese; masha cheese, my Lady, shall I send you some?"

"*Fondu*, Papa," whispered Miss Lucy.

"Oh! cheese *fondoo*, is it? well, then, any cheese *fondoo*, Miss Pottle," continued the Squire, utterly regardless of the looks of horror which his daughters cast around them, at the unmerciful manner in which their papa murdered every French or foreign word.

Nothing farther took place during the rest of the repast, to ruffle either the temper of the hostess or her guests.

The dessert was in the same style of lavish profusion as the dinner, but being Nature's handywork rather than that of the cook's, passed off without any thing remarkable, save the repeated boasting of Mrs. Botts, about the perfection of "My pineries, my graperies;

my upper, my under, and my assistant gardeners !”

After a succession of mutual health-drinking had gone round, upon the performance of which ceremony Botts was extremely punctilious, and after the usual quantity of guinea-pigs, which had been made of almonds and raisins ; faces from apples, teeth from oranges, and little old women from napkins and brown thumbs, to amuse a herd of juvenile Bottses and Skrewfords, who were let loose into the room ; the ladies retired, leaving the gentlemen, in what is called the good old English fashion, to talk politics, or devour scalding port and rough claret. Much as Herbert disliked this custom, so essentially confined to our Island, he was less averse to it at present, from the horror he had conceived for the female party, and the pleasure he found in the originality of the clergyman, who kept the whole table in a roar of laughter by his quaint stories, communicated in a more extraordinary dialect ; that is to say all, except the

reformer and Mr. Basinville, the one affecting to despise every joke which had no connexion with politics, and the other not understanding, or feigning not to comprehend, any story which did not originate in Almack's.

"Did you ever hear of the King and the Bag Parson?" demanded Squirt, "and 'fore George, an' it would please God to restore him to health, he zould hunt me twice a-week all next zeazon."

"That is the term; hunt is the word, Sir. Of what use is a king, but to hunt the money out of our pockets to fill those of a parcel of placemen and pensioners? What caused the ruin of Rome, but the brutal luxury, debauchery, and extravagance of its emperors and courtiers? What causes the unceasing prosperity of America, but its having neither kings nor lords? and what will cause our ruin, but the kings and rotten boroughs! If I had my way—"

"It would probably lead you to the Tower," said Alfred.

"May I beg you to remember, Mr. Wrangle," added Herbert, "that I have the honour of belonging to the household brigade."

"And let me also inform you," said the veteran, "that his Majesty, before we marched to embark in Ninety-six—"

"Gentlemen," retorted the reformer, "permit me to say, that I bear no malice against the individual at the head of the nation, but I hate all kings and lords: I hate myself almost because I'm told I've some noble blood in my veins; but though I regard the man as a man, I detest him as a king."

Herbert felt little inclined to take notice of Mr. Wrangle's common-place, radical declamation; however, he thought it high time to put an end to the subject. Interrupting the overbearing and vehement speaker, he quietly said, "I have hitherto considered it as utterly dissonant with English principles of liberality to abuse or vilify any man behind his back, especially one whose position in life precludes the possibility of his avenging or

even defending himself;—this may be perfectly in accordance with the gentle spirit of American liberty, but it is strongly opposed to British generosity or justice. I love the the King, Sir; not alone as a man, but as my sovereign; and while I wear the uniform of the corps to which I have the honour to belong, or indeed any other, no man living shall utter one syllable of reproach against the best, the most virtuous monarch who ever breathed, without declaring that his intention is to offer me a personal insult: So,” added Herbert, turning to his host, “I beg to propose a toast—‘The King! and may Providence quickly restore him to us!’”

“Amen!” cried the clergyman; who, after tossing down a bumper, sprang on his legs, gave the table a thump with his hand, which made the glasses rattle, and then commenced a succession of “hurrahs!” in which he was joined by the whole party, except Wrangle, who sat sullen, sulky, and mute for the rest of the evening.

Herbert now requested the Parson to continue the anecdote he was previously about to relate.

“With all my skin,” replied Squirt. “It’s above twenty years since, I’d a bit of a living up in the Dorsetshire country, where I knowed every fox in the covers as if they’d been my own zpaniels. There was a many of ’em I us’d to feed when they were cubs, and on it I made a vixen with as fine a litter as ever you clapped eyes on; she had such a hankering for me, that at last I tices her by degrees down to the church, takes out a board under the pulpit, and there she was as snug as the clerk. Bless you! she took to it like a bishop. Poor creturs! they grew up nice uns, and was all killed in the zecond zeazon, after as fine runs as ever a man could like to zee: indeed I don’t think there never waz five foxes as killed so many horses. Well, I hadn’t seen the vixen, as I knowed by a slit in her ear, for some time; when, as I was a coming home one night from a christening, I

heard a croaking, and a youking in the hedge; off I gets, in I goes, and zure enough there was Bess with her foot and her brush in a vermin trap; i'cod! I takes her out, carries her home, gives her a loose stall, and doctored her properly, as if she'd been a child. When she was all right, thinks I, you may be off, Bess, and as I was going across country fifteen miles, to do a bit of work for a friend, I slipped on my big coat, pops my nightcap in one pocket, and Bess in t'other, just to give her a lift to the cover. Well, as I turned the angle of a road, who should I come slap upon but the King himself, a coming home from hunting: 'Blank day,' says I to myself, 'thought so; no scent; ush!' I draws off to one side, and when the King seed me, sayz he, 'Eh, eh, Parson Squirt, how are you, how are you? what, not out, how's that, how's that? where are all your foxes? blank day—blank day, bad job.'"

"'Please your Majesty,' zays I, 'if your Majesty's a mind, I can give you a bit of a

gallop, I'll find for you directly ;' at the same time I keeps my hand tight on Bess's neck, for she began to get fidgitty when she scented the dogs.—'What d'ye mean? what d'ye mean? Seen a fox? eh, eh?' says the King.—'Mayhap,' zays I, 'but please your Majesty, if you'll give me ten minutes ztart, and then lay on the dogs, I'll promise your Majesty a gallop.'—'What, what! make the King hunt down the church? eh, eh?' said his Majesty, joking like. Howsomever he agreed; zo away I goes down to the tree, takes Bess out, and off I starts like the wind down to the church, jumps off my horse, and gets up in the bellfray, about three miles an end. Presently, I zees Bess a making for the same place, so I opens the door, in she slips, sneaks under the pulpit, and up I gets again. In about ten minutes I hears 'em; sweet music, running breast high; might a kivered 'em with a zheet. Down they comes slap to the church door, King and all. 'Well,' says I, 'please your Majesty, mayhap you never run a bag

parson before:' and I thought he'd a died laughing, when he heard the rights on't. Howsomever, he sent me, God bless him! a present of a pipe of port, and I never met him arterwards but what he talked to me as kind as if I'd been a lord."

This anecdote called forth peals of laughter; and the proposition to join the ladies being accepted, the party adjourned to the drawing-room, where cards, music, and charades occupied them until a late hour.

The weather, on the following day, rendering it impossible to think of shooting, in consequence of an unexpected fall of snow, Alfred and his companion directed the horses to be put to their carriage, and soon after breakfast proceeded on their route to Glynn Castle.

CHAPTER V.

AFTER having quitted Lord Lymington's, Emily proceeded to the Dropmore's, and thence to the house of Lord and Lady Woodbine, where she was much shocked by the contents of the following anonymous letter, addressed to Mrs. Walden, and which tended greatly to increase the anxieties of her present difficult situation. It ran thus:—

“If Miss Manby entertains any *real* affection for Herbert Milton, or has any regard for her own welfare or future happiness, she is earnestly entreated to beware how she persist in an attachment which must infallibly lead to the ruin of Colonel Milton, and the utter loss of her own peace of mind. The writer of this has the most positive and indisputable grounds for asserting not only that Sir Herbert will never consent to the union of his son

with Miss Manby, but, in the event of such a marriage taking place without his consent, that he will *inevitably disinherit* his child, and adopt his wily and designing cousin. The most important reasons preclude the writer from openly addressing Miss Manby; but, although anonymous, in God's name! let not this warning be rejected,—let it not have the less weight and importance on her mind. Friendship and esteem for both Miss Manby and Colonel Milton; abhorrence of the infamous and mercenary schemes of Alfred Milton, are the only motives which have given rise to a mode of communication which the writer deprecates as much as Miss Manby, but which circumstances rigorously demand. Should these few lines have the effect of saving Miss Manby from the misery which must ensue from such a union, the writer will at least have had the happiness of rescuing two victims from destruction, and of defeating the vile plans of the most cold-blooded, artful villain that ever breathed."

Much as Emily might have felt inclined to treat with contempt any communication of an anonymous nature, yet there was a tone of solemnity in the expression of this letter, which did indeed make the greatest impression, and awaken the most serious reflections in her mind. She had long conceived the greatest aversion to the character and conduct of Alfred Milton generally; though she could not avoid being amused by his conversation; indeed, since Herbert had been the principal subject of Alfred's observations, Emily found that her disinclination to his society had in a considerable degree diminished. Yet, in despite of the grace and art with which he contrived to veil his real disposition, there was an expression of falsehood and treachery in his countenance; and, notwithstanding the caution he took to conceal it, a degree of levity, selfishness, and want of feeling in his observations which frequently betrayed the coldness of his heart. Bad, however, as might have been her opinion of

him, yet to conceive him capable of so base a plan, or indeed that he could possibly entertain any sinister intentions against a cousin for whom he professed so much regard and affection, was more than she could credit. Thus, as far as Alfred was concerned, both Mrs. Walden and her young friend looked upon the communication as the malicious calumny of some concealed enemy.

The author of this letter was no other than Lady Catesby, who, upon her recovery, resolved, by every means in her power, to wreak her revenge upon Alfred. To expose him openly to his cousin was impossible, without risking her own reputation; she therefore determined to commence her operations by one anonymous missive directed to Mrs. Walden, and another nearly of the same tenor to Sidney, both of whom, especially the latter, she well knew were armed with no kindly feelings towards Alfred.

The letter to Sidney was written much in the same language as that to Mrs. Walden.

It reached Sidney through the medium of the twopenny post, and was couched in the following terms:—

“No one is better able to judge than yourself, Captain Sidney (who well know the man), what must be the nature of Alfred Milton's real sentiments towards a cousin, who is the only existing barrier between himself and the large fortune of his uncle—”

“Why,” said Sidney, laughing, “he would probably cut his throat, if he could do so without any risk to his own; and very tempting too, if one had no conscience. But what the devil have we here!” continued he, as he turned the paper over,—“no name! oh, oh! anonymous! I swore I never would read one in all my life; but this promises some fun, so let us see.—”

“Do you suppose,” proceeded the writer, “that Alfred Milton has no other object in view, in attempting to accelerate his cousin's marriage with Miss Manby, than a mere disinterested regard for their happiness?—be-

lieve it not, for a more vile and detestable scheme never entered into the breast of human being, than that concocted by Alfred against his cousin. Who is there, who knows him, who will give him credit for a single particle of generosity or kindness emanating from his base and treacherous heart?"—

"Civil, and excessively flattering!" exclaimed Sidney; "it is a woman, I'll bet a *rouleau*, and a vixen into the bargain; and ten to one I name her. But let us go on, the plot thickens."—

"Though particular circumstances render it necessary for me to conceal my name for the present, yet I most earnestly implore you, Captain Sidney, to warn your friend of the danger which threatens him. Sir Herbert Milton *never* will consent to his marriage with Miss Manby, and Alfred knows it beyond a doubt. Moreover, the artful villain is equally aware, that, should he succeed in inducing his cousin to marry in despite of Sir Herbert's positive objections, Herbert will at once be

disinherited, and that he will as speedily profit by his cousin's *irrevocable* disgrace ! The man who could place his own infamous hireling near the person of his cousin, to betray his confidence, and intercept his letters ; —the man who could instigate the same blood-thirsty bandit to make an attempt on his cousin's life—”

“ Oh come,” said the generous-hearted Sidney, casting the letter from him ; “ this is a little *trop fort* !—hang me, if I believe a word of it ! No, no,” added he, “ I think he is bad enough for any thing in a quiet way—turning up a king two or three times at *ecarté par extraordinaire*, or sticking a lame horse into one ; but, confound it ! here's robbery, murder, and God knows what else ?—*Peste* ! that is carrying the joke too far. It is disgusting !” continued he, as he kicked the fallen letter with his foot. “ Mrs. Thornby, you've somewhat overshot your mark ; this is one of your pretty schemes to break off a marriage, but it won't do. So, by George !

though I think the man a beast, and that Herbert really does place a little too much confidence in him, yet I'll send the vile scrap to Herbert, and beg him at once to shew it to Alfred."

So saying, he picked up the letter, rode down to White's, got a frank, and enclosed the anonymous epistle, with the following few lines from himself.

"DEAR BERTY,—I think it right to forward to you the enclosed, which is the neatest specimen of rascality, lies, and scandal, that ever issued from a woman's pen. I'll back Mrs. Thornby as the author, against the field, in the first place; and the next, that the whole is a vile tissue of the most atrocious and disgusting calumny. You had better shew it to Alfred to put him on his guard; for it is rather too much to have such infamous libels written against one, by a nasty designing virago like old mother Thornby.—Petrarch is up a point for the Derby; the

Merlin colt improves wonderfully for the two thousand guinea stakes; Tom Daintry lost three thousand six hundred pounds, over the way, last night. Nobody in town, save foreign ambassadors and bailiffs;—I can't get leave, or I would join you at Glynn, where I wish you much amusement. By-the-bye, mind your eye, my dear fellow, or Sir Owen will bag it to a certainty. He has a trick of qualifying people for blind-man's buff; I always take the precaution of bribing his man, to omit the shot in his gun. Harry Thursby's just come back—saw him for an instant; he looks wonderfully constant."

This letter reached the cousins on the night of their arrival at Glynn Castle, a fine baronial domain, the splendour of which was well sustained by the magnificent hospitality of its amiable owner, Sir Owen Griffiths Glynn (or *Srewin*, as he was generally called by his numerous dependants), and his accomplished lady.

It was late in the evening when the cousins arrived, and the party assembled in the house had already retired to prepare for dinner. Herbert, therefore, hastened to the apartment allotted to him, and having completed his toilette, descended into the long suite of chambers and galleries which conducted to the drawing-room; upon inquiring of the groom-of-the-chambers, he found that neither Sir Owen nor her Ladyship had yet descended, and he therefore paused awhile in the library, with a view of waiting to see them ere they joined the rest of the party. The rooms as yet were only lighted by the reflection of the immense logs of wood and blocks of coal which were crackling, splitting, and roaring in the handsome but ancient fireplaces; suddenly his attention was attracted by the sound of a slight prelude on a piano-forte in the adjacent room, and a mixed sensation of pleasure and pique stole across his mind, when he heard the player suddenly break off into the plaintive and pathetic notes

of an air which he himself had copied and sent from Spain to Mrs. Walden. "I wish she had not given that away!" said Herbert to himself with a little feeling of jealousy; "I shall hate the air now, for I thought no one else could have it." He was pursuing this train of reflection, when he was interrupted by Lady Theodosia, who, after the sincerest congratulations at seeing him once more in safety at home, led him into the adjacent room, where, before her Ladyship had scarcely passed the threshold, she was surprised by an exclamation of "Good God! Colonel Milton!" in a tone of the deepest emotion and astonishment, and a cry of "Can it be possible! Miss Manby! what unexpected happiness!" and before her Ladyship could approach to the assistance of her fair friend, for in fact it was no other than Miss Manby, she saw her sink almost fainting for support upon the instrument from which she had arisen. Herbert's embarrassment and agony were not less than the emotion which

his sudden appearance had caused to the lovely Emily. Her Ladyship, however, quickly raised her young visitor, and beckoning to Herbert, who stood almost like a statue in the midst of the room, she desired him to open the door which conducted into her own boudoir, where she retired with Emily before any of the party, whose voices she heard in the galleries, had entered.

CHAPTER VI.

BEFORE Herbert had recovered from the surprise and agitation into which he had been thrown by an occurrence so unexpected, he was surrounded by the different guests, who had now assembled, and who almost overpowered him by their compliments and felicitations. His annoyance was, however, considerably augmented by perceiving Mr. Bramble amongst the foremost of the group, who left him no doubt of the immediate vicinity of the rest of his family, by exclaiming, in reply to Herbert's inquiry after their health ; " Oh, quite well, but never ready : never were in time for any thing in their life ; egad, it's now nine minutes past seven, and they went up to dress at half-past five. You know I don't think it civil to Lady Theodosia, but they no more mind what I say, than the sun-dial cares for the moon !" Scarcely had

this been uttered, ere he exclaimed, "Miraculous! here they are before the dinner;—by-the-bye," added he, "it's eleven minutes past seven,—I wonder when it will be ready,—hungry as an Esquimaux."

Herbert, whose eyes were fixed on the door of the *boudoir*, was now assailed by Mrs. Bramble and her daughters, who, after almost wringing his hands off, overwhelmed him with a string of congratulations and questions that nearly confounded him, nor could he escape one or other of the family before the dinner was announced; they seemed to have given each other the nod to dodge him round the apartment.

Lady Theodosia was occupied in offering all the necessary assistance to Emily, and she discovered in a moment what was the cause of her sudden indisposition. Her Ladyship now regretted that she had omitted to mention Herbert's expected arrival, by which the shock might have been avoided; but as she was utterly ignorant of their being

farther known to each other than mere London acquaintance, she had not thought it necessary to enumerate her expected guests. However, with great delicacy and tact, she forebore to make any sort of allusion to the state of her feelings, except by pressing her hand, and whispering in her ear as they again returned into the drawing-room, "I am trustworthy."

The rest of the party, which had now wholly assembled, consisted of one or two noblemen and their ladies, Lord and Lady Woodbine and their daughters, Lord Pastern, Sir Greville Giltspur, some young men who had gladly taken advantage of a frost to escape from Melton (where they went down more for the fashion and renown of the thing, than from any real attachment to the sport), and a family or two from the neighbourhood. As soon as Lady Theodosia entered the room, dinner was announced, and to the utter annoyance and horror of Herbert, Miss Margaret Bramble seized his arm (he feeling as

if he could almost have kicked her), whilst Emily, whose eye met his as they quitted the room, did not appear at all more pleased with her attendant, Sir Greville; whose elder brother having just died, he had succeeded to a large landed property, and from a good-natured, unaffected, dinner-hunting younger brother, had been metamorphosed into a most consummate mass of folly.

Herbert's position at dinner was between his tormentor and one of the Miss Woodbines, a beautiful and lovely creature, who, it was said, was engaged to marry Lord Pastern, though her father was well aware that she had been long attached to a handsome young officer, who, to the great delight of the daughter, and utter annoyance of Lord Woodbine and his intended son-in-law, was one of the party from Melton. Opposite to Herbert was seated Miss Manby, and if, after so long a separation, their eyes occasionally encountered each other, if they now and then mutually gazed upon the face which was to each a

standard of human perfection, no one could be surprised. The effect produced upon the minds of the two lovers was nearly similar; each thought the other, if possible, improved. Herbert's physiognomy had attained a more marked and manly expression; his eyes had assumed a darker—a more expressive tone; his complexion, in shewing the effects of a southern climate, had lost none of its clearness; his figure was more settled and dignified, without being diminished in grace; whilst the broad cicatrice left by the assassin's sword upon his forehead, enhanced the beauty of his countenance in the estimation of his fair mistress. Herbert thought Miss Manby's features improved by her being thinner; the regularity of her traits, without being diminished, appeared less striking; the expression of her eye was more interesting from having assumed a deeper cast of melancholy, the dimple in her cheek appeared more visible, and her smile still more enchanting. Her figure, though it had lost some slight

portion of *embonpoint*, still retained all its matchless grace, and Herbert could almost have beaten his indefatigable neighbour for arousing him with her eternal questions and observations from the delightful reveries which the loved being opposite had occasioned. Reason, opposition, every difficulty to their union, appeared to have vanished by their mutual presence; and although neither had declared their sentiments, yet their sensations were the most delightful, the most enviable. The conversation, which hitherto had been merely confined to immediate neighbours, now began to take a much more lively turn, and Herbert found himself called upon to narrate a number of circumstances, and to give many details, not only respecting the armies, but more particularly relating to his own adventures. It may be well imagined with what intense interest Miss Manby listened to every word which fell from his lips; and it was not without the utmost effort that she was enabled to control the emotion

excited by his simple and modest narration of his own gallant conduct. But before we relate the conversation, we must introduce a few of the party more distinctly to our readers.

Lord Woodbine was a nobleman possessing large landed estates, and some borough interest; and from having married the daughter of a peer of high rank, possessing great parliamentary and ministerial influence, he had by these means rather than from any merit of his own, obtained the distinguished honour of being called to the Upper House. He had a magnificent house, beautiful daughters, was one of the best judges of a horse in the three kingdoms, and even at his time of life, could shew his back to some of the best riders across country in England, for which he was far more celebrated amongst your thirsty country gentlemen, than for the velocity with which he was wont to pass the bottle. Riding over one of his hounds, killing a hen-pheasant, or shewing signs of impatience

for a fresh bottle of claret, constituted a trinity of sins, which were without redemption in his mind. The contrast between his Lordship and Lady Woodbine was striking: she was all grace, refinement, simplicity, and gentleness. Descended from one of the noblest families of the realm, she was as remarkable for the beauty of her person as for her virtues and amiable qualities: her conversation was distinguished for its purity, absence of affectation, candour, and elegance; his was marked with the stamp of cunning, selfishness, and contempt of grammar; and although no man in the kingdom piqued himself upon greater loyalty and attachment to his Majesty's person, yet no individual could treat with such utter indignity his sovereign's legitimate English.

Lord Pastern, his intended son-in-law, was a young nobleman of considerable fortune and still fairer prospects, but graceless, slovenly, awkward, and proverbial for the extreme negligence of his appearance; and

indeed, when compared with his young and handsome rival, one could scarcely believe that so young and lovely a being as Rosalind Woodbine, could sacrifice her affection for the one to the rank and prospects of the other. Riding after the hounds, not to call it hunting (of the science of which he had no idea), was the young Lord's favourite passion; and he might be seen at the cover side, and known, if seen, by his torn beaverless hat, his stained and threadbare coat, his cords, which once might have been white, but never received any other washing than that which fell from Heaven. He might farther be distinguished by one ill-cleansed boot being fastened up with a strip of soiled leather, and the other exposing a blue worsted stocking, through the long *hiatus* which existed between the adjacent parts of his dress. Not to mention his hatred to gloves, his utter contempt of the coquetry of starch, or, in short, his collar—which was torn and shredded like the tattered foresail of a fishing-boat.

Sir Greville Giltspur, of whom we have already spoken, had, in addition to his other manifold good qualities, the most ludicrous opinion of his own abilities, person, and importance. He imagined that all men who declined to enter into conversation with him from absolute contempt of his coxcombic nonsense, were silent from mere dread of the pith and cleverness of his repartees—above all, he flattered himself that the young were, one and all, in love with his person, and that the old were enamoured of his estates: in short, if self-adoration could create worldly happiness, Sir Greville was at the pinnacle of human bliss. One good quality he however did possess, which consisted in evincing a great deal of openness and candour in his actions, or rather movements—for scarce a day passed without his informing the world of his place of abode through the medium of the papers, where one might incessantly read “Sir Greville Giltspur from Brand Castle on a tour,”—“Sir Greville Giltspur is entertain-

ing a large party of distinguished fashionables at his splendid mansion, Brand Castle,"—"Sir Greville Giltspur, from his residence in Upper Grosvenor-street, to his magnificent seat, Brand Castle."

"Well, Sir Greville," said Lord Pastern, across the table, "so you've lost your law-suit about the hack you purchased?"

"Yes," replied the Baronet, "it's the only time in my life, that I was ever deceived in buying a horse."

"You never relied upon your own judgment before then, most probably," said Alfred Milton.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Milton," rejoined the Baronet, nettled, "every one knows my stud were all chosen by myself: and I believe few can equal it in Staffordshire or Leicestershire."

"But Shipston tells me you've not got an orse fit to ride, in your stable," observed Lord Woodbine: "all lame or amiss."

"Why the fact is," replied the other, "one

is completely at the mercy of one's stud-groom: if they had their own way, they would never permit one to ride at all; except, perhaps, a poney."

"You ought not to quarrel with the man for having such a regard for your neck, Greville," retorted Alfred.

The Baronet looked very cross, but made no reply.

"As to the law-suit, however," said he, "I have written to my solicitor to direct my counsel to move for a new trial: for although I must lose it, yet my opponent is a poor devil, and it will cost him a great deal of money in the mean time; which will be some satisfaction for his having done me."

"But it seems you did yourself," exclaimed Lord Pastern: "follow my advice: never trust to your own judgment again, it is a most dangerous confidence."

"If ever you wish to purchase an ack or an orse again, follow my plan," said Lord Woodbine, "which is this: just take im for

alf an our, and ammer im like Old Arry along an igh road, where they've been a ittering down fresh flints, and if he don't gie an int of not liking it, you may be pretty sure he's as sound in his legs as an andspike."

That very sensible and sociable custom, which obliges every well bred man in England to wait patiently ere he satisfy his curiosity, or quench his thirst, until he has gone through the operation of nodding at some other sympathetic and doughty individual, had caused Mr. Bramble considerable annoyance, as he had hitherto been unable to obtain a glass of Champagne, in which beverage his heart particularly delighted. At last, however, he was relieved by Alfred, who quietly raising his glass, and significantly bowing, was answered by Mr. Bramble, with "*Con sommo Piacere Amico*, and," added he, whispering across the table, "*Bis*, whenever you please." Having gulped down his broad glass of sillery,—and what man of skill or taste, as a *Gourmet* *Priseur*, would ever drink Champagne from

one of those fathomless glasses, which are better adapted to the long pliant neck of a crane, or an emue, than the short, starched, apoplectic throats of modern gentlemen?—Bramble exclaimed, “Gad, it’s dry!” making a slight motion of disappointment by compressing his lips.

“Do you prefer *Mousseux*?” said the host; “take the sweet Champagne,” to Mr. Bramble.

“I know I’ve bad taste,” replied the other; “but I do candidly confess I prefer the sparkling.” And so saying, his features relaxed: and away went the second glass after its rival. This was a constant feint on the part of Mr. Bramble, to whom, in fact, sweet, dry, still, sparkling, pink, or white, were equally acceptable, provided he could get enough; and as he generally obtained an extra glass at least by this *ruse*, he put it in practice whenever circumstances permitted.

“Do you think Miss Manby handsome?” said Miss Bramble in an under tone, address-

ing Herbert; "she is so serious, so solemn, I wonder if she can laugh?"

"Certainly not at her neighbour's wit," replied Herbert.

"Don't you think Sir Greville pleasant? Papa says he is very rich; that Brand Castle is a charming place. I thought, between ourselves, he was very attentive to Mary, last season: we are, I believe, to take him on our way to the North—he has pressed us very much to go there."

Unfortunately for Miss Bramble's remark, Sir Greville addressed Herbert at this moment.

"I wish you would tell me, Milton, if you think I had better take out a chariot or a landau to Spain? I have been recommended by my physicians to travel a little, whilst the repairs are going on at Brand Castle; I am also going to new furnish it. I hope to shew it you when I come back, though for the first two years I suppose I shall not be able to see any one there."

Miss Bramble looked rather foolish at this: however, Herbert took no notice, but answered, "If you really intend going to Spain, I should recommend your taking out a good saddle, rather than a vehicle of any kind; you will find it more useful than any carriage."

"Do you mean to say that there is no travelling in a *dormeuse*? Good God! what a barbarous place! Then I certainly will not leave England; for I always make it a point of travelling by night. I hate seeing trees, woods, and water; my plan is to take a little opium and sleep on the road; and as for a sight—oh! the horror!"

"Who is your architect at Brand?" demanded Lady Woodbine. "If you have not already chosen one, I can strongly recommend ours."

"Oh, I'm my own architect—I always draw my own plans," replied the Baronet, "and superintend the work myself."

"Ow the devil can you do that," said Lord

Woodbine, "if you intend starting off to Spain?—Look you here; they say a man as an ass for his client, who is his own lawyer; but you may take my word for it, that a greater goose still is the man who is his own architect. The only thing one as to do is this, be prepared to pay fifty per cent. more than you bargain for, and don't believe none of their umbug about not exceeding the estimate."

"Is not Herbert Milton almost the handsomest creature you ever saw?" said Miss Woodbine to her intended husband, casting a look across the table: "and he dresses so well, so gentlemanly. Why don't you learn to put on a tie like him?"

"I'll endeavour to improve, but I cannot bear men who wear starch; I think it neither looks sporting nor parliamentary; besides, all the footmen wear it."

"They look at least clean, Lord Pastern," said the young lady, with a tone of contempt, which, if his Lordship had built his happiness

on possessing her heart, must have been quite sufficient to have induced him to renounce his hopes : but he immediately turned to Sir Greville, to ask what sport he had on the moors.

“ Capital !” answered the Baronet. “ I think I have as fine shooting on the Brand Castle moors as any in the world. I can walk out any morning and bag my fifty brace—but then, you know, I rather pique myself on being a tolerably fair shot.”

“ Then you must have improved wonderfully, Giltspur,” said Lord Woodbine ; “ for when you were down with me, I think you only killed an en or two, and an are.”

“ My gun ! entirely the fault of my gun ! I’ll back my shots to-morrow against your’s, my Lord.”

“ By George ! I’ll take you,” exclaimed his Lordship ; “ you may fire more shots ; but unless ens count, I’ll back my dead birds against yours.”

The ladies had no sooner left the room, and

the party settled round the horse-shoe table, placed opposite to the fire, than Sir Owen observed,

“A sad thing, poor Seabridge's death; a real loss to the country; he was a most promising, amiable, young man, and would one day, most probably, have played a conspicuous part in the House.”

“By-the-bye,” said Lord Pastern, “I hear that the present Lord Seabridge is to marry Miss Manby: she refused him before he went abroad, because they said she was in love with some man who was killed in Spain; some man in the Guards: did you ever hear who it was?” said his Lordship to Herbert.

“We have unfortunately lost so many fine fellows,” answered Herbert, endeavouring to conceal his annoyance, “that it would be impossible to tell; but I dare say, it is not true; I never heard of any attachment of this nature.”

“At all events, it appears she has made up her mind to marry Henry upon his return,”

rejoined his Lordship; "and egad, considering all things, I should think she might jump at the offer; for, though she does appear to look a little drooping, I dare say she has forgotten her former lover by this time."

The conversation, fortunately for Herbert, now turned on sporting and agricultural subjects, and he awaited with anxiety the usual summons to attend the ladies.

From the moment of seeing Emily, all his good resolutions had vanished: as he gazed upon her at dinner, the thought of Lord Seabridge had crossed his imagination, and the idea of her being united to his Lordship became insupportable;—what he had just heard was in corroboration of his previous information: and, whatever might be the result, he felt that it was a duty he owed Miss Manby, either at once to leave Glynn, or to declare himself. The first he found impossible, it was an effort too great for him to attempt; and he naturally concluded, that either his departure or silence would at once prove to

Miss Manby that she had been deceived, and would most probably induce her to accept the offer of Lord Seabridge; besides, he began to agree with Alfred, that there would be no harm, at least, in making an avowal of his sentiments, and that unless he did so, it would be carrying his scruples and deference to his father too far; he determined, therefore, if the opportunity should occur, to declare himself without farther hesitation. This opportunity, however, did not take place; but he said enough to set her mind completely at rest, as to the nature of his feelings towards her, and to prepare her for the avowal which he now resolved to make by letter, as soon as he retired to his apartment. Upon entering his bed-room, Herbert's servant gave him Sidney's letter, which he immediately proceeded to communicate to his cousin, whose room was contiguous; and although Alfred started and turned pale, at an accusation which was indeed so well founded, yet, he exclaimed, "It is not Mrs. Thornby! I am

satisfied! It is Lady Catesby! I warned you of her wickedness: here are the proofs."

Herbert immediately tranquillized his cousin perfectly as to his own opinion on the subject, by saying, that he considered it a base fabrication, and that it made no other impression on his mind than to give him a more thorough contempt for her Ladyship; "and to prove it to you, my dear Alfred," said Herbert, "I will fairly confess that I am going to declare myself, at once, to Emily by letter; as the opportunity may not occur amidst so large a party of speaking to her alone."

"I think you are perfectly right," rejoined Alfred, "though really, after such a cursed libel as that, I am afraid to give a word of advice upon the subject; it is too cruel, too infamous, by God! but she shall suffer for it. I have a secret in my possession, and she knows it; which were I to divulge, it would prove fatal to her. Swear not to reveal it until you have my permission, and I will

confide it to you ;” and he then narrated Lady Catesby’s history, and his own intrigue with her.

The dislike Herbert had ever conceived for Lady Catesby was now augmented to the utmost degree, and his mind was accordingly fully prepared to reject, with contempt, any direct or indirect effort on her part to interfere in his future plans.

After a long conversation with his cousin, in which he renewed his expressions of regard and confidence, he retired to his own apartment, resolving to follow the advice of the latter, who strongly recommended a verbal rather than a written communication, as it would notwithstanding be necessary to resort to a personal communication at last. Herbert therefore made up his mind to feign indisposition in the morning, should no opportunity occur of conversing with Miss Manby before the commencement of the *battue*. This stratagem, however, was rendered unnecessary: upon descending before breakfast into

the library, he found Emily had preceded him ; and if there might have been some hidden motive in her thus early appearance,—perhaps a motive sympathetic with his feelings,—no one could surely be surprised or even condemn her.

The embarrassment on seeing each other was mutual, for it was the first time they had ever met without the presence of a third person. Their interview was necessarily of short duration, but it was one of deep interest, and it sufficed to convince Emily of the reality of Herbert's affection, and to satisfy Herbert by the tears which stood in the eyes of Emily as he professed his unalterable attachment, that, happen what would, his brightest hopes might yet be realized.

CHAPTER VII.

WHEN Miss Manby appeared to take her place at the breakfast-table, the whole of the large party were already assembled; and her distress may be imagined, when, upon entering the apartment, the words "Oh, but I am certain he has proposed," issuing from the lips of Miss Bramble, struck her ear. For a moment she stood as in a state of suspense, whether to advance or retire; but fortunately her eye caught that of Herbert, and she saw with joy, both by his presence and manner, that she could not have been the object of the conversation. Luckily her embarrassment escaped the notice of the party, some of whom were intent on discussing the subject which had produced Miss Bramble's observation, and the rest were occupied in canvassing the relative merits of flints and detonaters, pointers and setters, and other important

matters connected with the sports they were about to enjoy.

“It must be a most consummate nuisance to propose,” said Sir Greville, half yawning.

“Especially when there is a probability of being refused, or at all events only accepted because the person dare not reject you,” observed the young officer, to whose attachment for Rosalind Woodbine we have before alluded.

“They do these things much better on the Continent,” rejoined Sir Greville, “where the fathers, mothers, and notaries arrange the whole affair; and where a man has no other trouble than to direct his valet to buy *bouquets*, and to order his jeweller to make up necklaces.” Mrs. Bramble looked at her daughter, and thought how well her colossal neck was adapted for a *collier de pierres fines*.

“Oh!” said Miss Margaret, with an affectation of sentiment, “but how dreadful to be married *par convenance*!—surely, Sir Greville, you cannot patronize such heartless proceed-

ings? Conceive being attached to one person, and being ordered forthwith to marry another horrid boring monster, for the sake of his fortune; the idea really gives me a sort of *serrement de cœur*;" and her eye met that of Miss Woodbine, which sparkled with no very favourable symptoms for Lord Pastern.

"Pray do not talk such a parcel of romantic nonsense, my dear," said Mrs. Bramble. "I think Sir Greville is quite right: your love marriages are generally much more likely to end unhappily, than those where reason and paternal advice are attended to; though I do not mean to say, that money is to be the only consideration."

"It is certainly better to unite landed property with it," said Mr. Bramble.

"Oh!" said the other sister, "though it must be shocking to be married *sans ryme ni raison*, as it were, yet it is very tremendous to listen to a proposal. How foolish people must look! I wonder what they say?"

"What do they say," said Alfred, address-

ing Sir Greville, "*quand on leur jette la corbeille?* I dare say you can tell us; for though I understand you never proposed, yet a man of your fortune and calibre has, of course, often been proposed to?"

This observation silenced Miss Bramble, and completely staggered Mrs. B., both of whom had perpetually persecuted the Baronet with their attacks, since he became proprietor of Brand Castle.

"I believe, I may venture to assert, without vanity, that I have once or twice been subjected to something very much like propositions," rejoined Sir Greville; "it is one of the painful attendants upon men in my position; but I always cut the matter short, by refusing point-blank."

"There is an old prophecy attached to Brand Castle, is there not?" demanded Alfred, whose delight it was to turn Sir Greville into ridicule, as well as to quiz Miss Bramble; "which declares, that the seventh Baronet of that ilk—which is, I believe, yourself—

is to marry the ugliest woman in England!"

Miss Bramble glanced at herself in the glass, and much as she coveted Brand Castle, did not at all consider that she was calculated to fulfil the prophecy.

"I believe there may be such a tradition; we have many of these curious things attached to our family; but, as I hate ugly women and detest children, I am resolved to remain a bachelor; and, in fact, I give it out as much as possible at the commencement of every season, to prevent disappointments."

"But, supposing you were to propose," replied the invincible Miss Margaret, "what would you say?"

"Do not suppose any thing half so ridiculous, pray;—ask Lord Pastern."

"If I were to wait to make a proposal until you received one, Greville," replied the Peer, "I should probably stand as good a chance as yourself of dying unmarried."

"Would to Heaven it were your destiny!"

said Miss Woodbine to herself, as she cast a look across the table at the young officer.

“You had better appeal to Captain Beaufoy,” continued his Lordship, purposely with a view of annoying his rival; “he has, I believe, proposed to half the heiresses in London; have you not, Beaufoy?”

“I certainly do not hesitate,” replied the other with good humour, “to avow that I did once propose to the heiress of a thousand virtues and amiable qualities, but whose dower consisted more in her mental and personal charms, than in any worldly riches; but I was less fortunate than Sir Greville or your Lordship.”

Lord Woodbine, who was well aware of his daughter's attachment for Captain Beaufoy, and, indeed, had commanded her to reject him and accept the other, evinced evident symptoms of uneasiness during this speech; nor did Lord Pastern feel more tranquil at thus unintentionally giving an opportunity to his handsome rival to express his sentiments

openly, and in a manner which neither of the noble lords could have anticipated.

“What, in the world did you say to her? you have not told us; come, Beaufoy!” exclaimed Sir Greville.

“It is asking rather too much of me,” rejoined the officer, whilst his eye glanced at that of the lovely Rosalind; “it is requiring rather an impossibility of me, now to remember what were my words, when at the very time I scarcely knew what I uttered;—all I recollect is—I was rejected; that never can be forgotten?”

“All I remember!” exclaimed Mr. Bramble, —“by-the-bye, that ham’s delicious; Westphalia I should think; higher smoked than Bayonne, one other slice!—all I recollect,” continued he, “is, that I was accepted; but the thought of a proposal is to me as odious as that of a corked bottle of Claret, which mine host makes his friends taste, until the foul beverage is nearly all consumed, instead of wisely having it put by for the ladies.”

"I beg leave to observe, Bramble," said Alfred, "that the ladies are not so easily deceived; though, I grant, your comparison holds good, as far as you are concerned, for you appear to have reserved your proposal for Mrs. Bramble."

"I agree with Bramble, perfectly!" exclaimed Sir Greville. "The very idea of a proposal is quite shocking! it's bad enough in a novel; in reality, it must be sickening—I wonder people can write such trash—I always make it a point to skip the page where your author commences his declarations: all the stuff about sighs, blushes, faintings, and palpitations, it would be much better to take all that for granted."

"I have no doubt, an author would gladly follow your plan," said Herbert, "for I know more than one of my literary friends, who have fairly told me, that they always felt ashamed of reading their own relation of such events, and that they would not have written with a glass before them, lest the image of

the folly they were inditing should be reflected in their own faces, and scare them from their labours."

Emily at length retired to her own apartment, whilst the gentlemen were arraying themselves in their shooting costume for the *battue*, for which the beauty of the day was highly favourable. In the course of half an hour the whole party, perfectly equipped for the sport, made their appearance in the quadrangle of the castle, which presented a gay and animated scene. Among the most conspicuous of the sportsmen was Sir Greville, whose costume and attendant, a tall, handsome *Jager*, excited the admiration, and awakened indescribable longings in the bosom of Mrs. Bramble; whilst it made the eyes of the hardy keepers, and still more astonished beaters, who approached as near as they dared, glisten with a mixture of contempt and wonder. The Baronet's head was protected by a handsome sable cap, from the centre of which hung a green velvet bag, with

a gold acorn, much like a Hussar's scako, without its pasteboard or stuffing. His neck was enveloped in a figured Madras cravat, while three or four under-waistcoats of different coloured Merinos were rolled across his chest, over which he wore a green velvet upper-waistcoat, ornamented with black Brandenburgs. His jacket, cut like the cotee of a Life-guardsman, was of mouse-coloured plush, on which were huge buttons of mother-of-pearl, figured with birds, boars, and other emblems of the chase. Across one shoulder was a cord of red and gold silk, to which was attached a small silver flask, containing Curacáo, and around his neck was suspended a whistle, for the purpose of calling his attendant. His nether man was arrayed in a pair of greenish *Shehabseger*-coloured leather trousers, and a pair of boots much better adapted for the ball-dress of a Lancer, than for the purpose of climbing the rough and slippery declivities of the Welsh dingles. A splendid Meerschaum pipe hung from his mouth, one

side of which was screwed up, to assist a thick column of smoke in finding its passage into the air. A pair of Mr. Houbigant's best kids *à bouton*, protected his hands, for which purpose he also wore round his waist a small muff, or *strauch*, as it is termed in Germany, where such defences against the intense cold are necessary. The *Jager* was not less conspicuous than his master, being arrayed in a cap and jacket, and trowsers of green cloth, ornamented with gold lace. A *couteau de chasse* was suspended in a handsome embroidered baldric at his side. Under one arm, in a green oil-skin case, was a Manton, and his left hand rested on the muzzle of a Purdy. Around his waist was slung the provision of shot, and at his back hung a German *Jagd Tasche*, or shooting-bag, decorated with the skins and horny points of several wild deer's feet; whilst a huge pair of whiskers and immense mustachios gave the finish to his appearance. On one side, the ladies of the party, attracted by the bustle of the scene and

beauty of the day, appeared at the steps of the great hall. Near to them was the worthy host himself, in consultation with the head-keeper, a huge and powerful-looking man, though already many years past the prime of life; his dark black eyes and sun-burnt countenance contrasting with the gray locks which escaped from beneath his gold-laced hat. Farther on were his assistants, in their dark plush liveries, holding in leashes two or three retrievers, and several brace of beautiful mute dwarf spaniels, of the choicest breed. Behind these a group of forty or fifty beaters, with faces hardy as the ribs of their native hills, and eyes blue, light, and merry as the hare-bell, were assembled at the wicket of the butlery, and were receiving from the hands of the old butler their horn of staunch carw. These men were not only picturesquely, but usefully accoutred, considering the multiplicity of accidents which occurred on occasions of this nature. Their heads were protected by strong and almost impenetrable

caps, falling down their backs much in the form of those hats called by seamen South-westerns. Their persons, down to the middle, were guarded by leather camisols, or shot-proof trunks, reaching from their necks down to their mid-legs; whilst they bore in their hands poles tipped with iron, equally useful in beating for game, as they were necessary to assist them in climbing the precipitous banks, or descending the rugged chasms of the covers. On another side of the quadrangle, several hardy mountain ponies were in readiness for those who preferred riding, whilst a couple of embryo keepers were holding two strong and shaggy galloways, loaded with large wicker panniers, destined to carry the produce of the chase through the woods, where no wheeled vehicle could penetrate. It required no great stretch of imagination, on looking at this scene, to carry back one's thoughts to the days of baronial grandeur, or to have mistaken the party assembled in the quadrangle for a body of feudal troops on the

point of sallying forth on some predatory excursion. There were the musketeers and men-at-arms, represented by the gentlemen and their servants. There were the squires with the chargers. Here the pikemen with their buff coats and bass-nets, were represented by the beaters. Farther on were the pages, with the sumpter-horses; and there Greville's *Jager* might not inappropriately have passed off, with his splendid dress and handsome person, as the leader of the band; whilst the chatelaine and her damsels required no more beautiful representatives than the fair group which occupied the broad flags of the grand entrance. The signal for departure was given by two *horners* who sounded the *Diane*, and who were employed on these occasions to regulate the advance of the beaters, or arrest the progress of the sportsmen; a wise, and almost necessary precaution, where so many guns were employed, and where the thickness of the covers and quantity of game caused a continual succession of firing.

Upon the arrival of the party at the spot destined for the commencement of the sport, the different guns and beaters were mustered by the head-keeper; who, after stationing the shooters at regular intervals, from the outward borders of the thickets down to the margin of the torrent, and placing a certain number of beaters between each, he took up his station on the most elevated ground. Here, attended by a bugle, in order to direct the movements of the line, and to preserve order in their progress—peasants being stationed on different points, whose business it was to register the number of shots fired by the party, by cutting notches on sticks, which were afterwards compared and averaged: the whole process, in short, was carried on with a degree of regularity, which appeared more like the precision of military movements, than those of a party assembled to wage war on hares and pheasants; but it was the only means of preventing the occurrence of those fatal accidents, which on similar occasions so

often convert a scene of pleasure and hilarity into one of affliction and unavailing regret. The splendour of the surrounding scenery, the romantic loveliness of the dingles, the majestic grandeur of the rocks, torrents, and adjacent mountains, enhanced the pleasure which Herbert felt on this occasion; and although he had often assisted at several large shooting parties in England, he had never seen any thing upon so grand a scale as the one now before him.

Every one having reached his station, the advance was sounded, and instead of that tumultuous roaring, screeching, and uproar which is usually the commencement of these meetings, the party advanced quietly, merely striking the brakes and bushes with their poles, or arousing the game by noises which could not be heard at any great distance. Ere long, however, all precautionary silence became superfluous, by the uninterrupted rattling of the fowling-pieces, as the game either rose whirring on the wing, or scampered

rapidly across the crackling leaves, when startled from beneath the brambles and withered herbage. The rattling of the guns resembled the continued and deadly tirallade of a body of light troops, rather than that of a peaceful and social shooting-party. "*Die Jagd ist ein bildniss der Schlachten*," says Schiller; and certainly to a soldier's mind there is something wonderfully soul-stirring and inspiring in a scene of this nature, which must bring to his remembrance the most glorious, the most exciting, though perhaps the most arduous, portion of his duty. The peeling echoes of the guns, the shouts of the keepers, the clang of the bugles, and, above all, the cries of "Forward! forward!" made the heart of Colonel Milton bound within him. He remembered the beautiful lines of Theodore Körner, where he describes the advance of his own brave corps, ("*Lutzow's Jagers*") as they drove the foe before them from crag to crag, on the mountainous borders of the vine-clad Rhine.

Every moment the scene became more animated, the report of the fowling-pieces being intermingled with the laughing of the sportsmen, and exclamations of the beaters in their native tongue. Here were heard cries of "An harr up! an harr Srewin koomin to yeu!—Kuck! kuck! wha woup!! hurs'ted."—"Mark! mick! forward!—Srewin, a wood-kuck!—Hurs'ton amenst ta laayers!!—a rap-put Srewin!—an ewan en tinna shoot!!" On another side four or five voices exclaimed, "That's my bird!" "I like that," "I killed it." "You fired under." "Do not shoot across me!" "I dropped that hare, I'll swear; the longest shot that ever I saw."—"Mark where that bird fell, what a splendid shot." "Ninety yards! brilliant, by George!" "I can hit a feather; not the right charge!—I took too long!—No practice—new gun—bad powder,"—and a host of other expressions: all those of a laudatory nature being, as usual, modestly uttered by the performers themselves or their own immediate attend-

ants. Now again was heard, "I'll swear I knocked that down," from Sir Greville. "I beg your pardon, my good fellow, it was at the point of my gun, being my shot into the bargain," replied Alfred Milton. "*Impossible, mon cher; I fired both barrels, did I not, Conrad?*"

"*Mais c'est clair, Monsieur le Chevalier Baronet,*" replied the Jager, as he exchanged the gun for that in his hand, for the purpose or pretence of re-loading it; "*Parbleu! toit un coup superbe—crac roid mort.*"

"I'll trouble you just to look at the locks, Mr. Conrad," said Alfred. "Why, man, it never went off!"—" *Sacre chapeaux!*" exclaimed the chasseur, as he very gravely examined the piece, which, in fact, had not exploded. "*Par Saint Hubert! ils ne valent pas le Diable! Mais c'est comique tout de même; car j'aurois juré, que Monsieur le Chevalier l'avoit tué: Gredins de chapeaux!*" added the Frenchman, as he plucked off the two caps and replenished them with fresh

ones, and cleaned the vent: "*Matins! tu nous as joué un joli tour.*"

Alfred, who upon every occasion was on the *qui vive* for tricks of all kinds, was determined to put the loyalty of Sir Owen's vassals, as well as their sagacity, to the test, waited until he saw a hen run and then rise immediately between the two Baronets,—he then roared out "a cock! a cock!" Bang, bang, went all four barrels of Sir Owen and Sir Greville, and down fell the bird.

"That's mine!" exclaimed both, at the same instant.

"Who killed that?" demanded Alfred.

"Srewin, Srewin, hur kilt un, by Cott?" screamed out three or four peasants.

"Ah, ah, God dem! *par exemple c'est fort!*" screeched forth Mr. Conrad. "*Messieurs, vous vous trompez, cette foi ci je le jure sur ma tête que c'étoit Monsieur le Chevalier.*"

"Dhem Sassenach!" retorted the Welshmen, again roaring; "hur's Srewin's pird, by Cott!"

In a moment, however, the beater, who had

gone forward to pick up the pheasant, informed his comrades in Welsh that it was a hen; when a dozen voices immediately exclaimed, "T'wana Srewin, twar ta Sasnach gentleman wi ta cat's skin cap, what kelt her."

"*Sacre baragoiners!*" said Conrad; "*je l'ai bien dit, parbleu!*" while the worthy host himself could hardly avoid laughing aloud with Alfred, at the dexterity with which his vassals attempted to rescue him from the onus of killing a hen.

Upon arriving at the romantic abode of one of the keepers, situated on the summit of a crag commanding the most beautiful and extensive prospects, the party found an admirable luncheon prepared for them; whilst the beaters and attendants were regaled with substantial food in a large shed constructed for the purpose. In short, nothing was omitted by Sir Owen to render the party as agreeable as possible; and it was not until a late hour of the evening, when darkness put an end to the sport, that they returned to the

Castle to dinner; when, by the printed list, distributed and brought in with some degree of ceremony by the head-keeper, it appeared that the fruit of the day's sport amounted to upwards of seven hundred head of game.

During the following days, Herbert had frequent opportunities of explaining to Miss Manby the exact nature of his position. Every thing was stated in a fair and candid manner. In short, he had not much difficulty in persuading her that the opposition of his father arose entirely from the machinations of Lady Catesby, whom, he said, Alfred had discovered beyond doubt to be the author of both the anonymous letters, a fact that Miss Manby could scarcely believe possible. Suffice it to say, it was agreed upon between them, that they should await Sir Herbert's arrival, when they fondly flattered themselves he would ratify their union; and after a few days passed in the utmost happiness, Emily left Glynn, to return with Lord and Lady

Woodbine, and Herbert proceeded with his cousin on a tour of visits, after which he intended to resume his regimental duties in London.

CHAPTER VIII.

DURING the winter months, the opportunities of meeting between Herbert and Emily occurred but seldom; a constant intercourse was, however, kept up by letter; and as the spring advanced, Herbert prepared to fulfil his engagement of accompanying his cousin Alfred to the Newmarket meeting, at which he had never yet been present.

“So my uncle is really at last coming over,” exclaimed Alfred, as the light vehicle dashed along at the tail of four Bourn-Bridge posters: “how much I long to be personally acquainted with him. I assure you, my dear Herbert, that you cannot be more desirous than I am of his arrival; we are already in some measure known to each other.”

“Known to each other!” exclaimed Herbert; “why, I imagined he had forgotten that

he had any other relations left in the world, save my mother and myself!"

"Oh, but I have taken the liberty to refresh his memory on that score," answered Alfred, "and he has done me the favour to administer some of his advice; I fear he takes me for a wild kind of personage, if I may judge by the dryness of his epistles! Do you know, I have often thought that some kind individual has been saying ill-natured things of me to your father; surely, Herbert, your mother would not play one such a trick?"

"You surprise me!" rejoined Herbert; "for we both appear to have reason to complain of the same thing, and it is therefore clear there must be some secret enemy, who endeavours to set my father against us; for he never mentions your name in any of his letters, and he says he hears I am horribly extravagant, and keep bad company."

"Well, the coincidence is certainly singular," answered Alfred, "but I will not rest

until I discover who is the mischief-maker. For you, it is indeed of little consequence, but it is a very serious matter for me to be traduced in the opinion of an uncle, whose esteem I value so highly, and who has honoured me with some degree of confidence, even in despite of the dryness of his correspondence."

"Correspondence!" exclaimed Herbert,—
"why you cannot be very low in his estimation, if he writes to you; he has scarcely written to me twenty times in his life; and then I might as well have read as many chapters of Chesterfield or Grandison."

"He has not written half so often to me," rejoined Alfred; "and those epistles, setting aside the few axioms for a more correct line of conduct which they contain, are entirely occupied with business."

"Business! why, what in the world can put it into my father's head to trouble you with his affairs?" demanded Herbert, "unless he wished to become a member of Brooks's or

White's, or to lay out a few thousands on the Ledger or Derby?"

"Why, the truth is that, somehow or other, he has discovered that I have a sort of interest with some three-starred proprietors," replied Alfred—"that is to say, with their wives, whose hearts I have won by dining with them now and then amidst their rice plantations in Portland and Devonshire-place, and now and then getting their daughters a stray ticket and a *chaperone* for Almack's, a private box at the play, a basket or two of game, or some such important and never-failing bait. Ergo, as he wishes to become a director, he condescends to coax me to canvass for him."

"Why, in the world, did you not tell me so?" demanded Herbert, somewhat piqued; "I might have succeeded as well as yourself, perhaps, in securing him some votes."

"I thought, of course," replied Alfred, "that Sir Herbert had told you of it himself,—it is surely no secret; indeed, I have your father's directions to address and publish a

letter to the proprietors, to solicit their suffrages upon his return."

"I never heard a word of it!" rejoined Herbert, "and I confess that his silence hurts me much."

"Why it is odd, Berty," continued Alfred, "and I cannot account for it: perhaps he has not, then, informed you of his intention to be returned to Parliament, and of his having purchased the seat which I now hold merely as his *locum tenens*."

"Not a syllable! and I do not know that my conduct has merited such treatment," answered Herbert, with some degree of vexation. "I should have been proud, if he had honoured me with his confidence; and it strikes me, that if he thought proper to employ a proxy to represent him in Parliament, he might have chosen his own son, who is not aware of having done any thing either to disgrace himself or his family."

"It is very strange certainly, but I hope you are not angry with me, my dear Her-

bert?" rejoined the cousin; "I trust you are not vexed at my having complied with your father's directions, which I, of course, concluded must proceed from some arrangement between you and him."

"Good God! my dear fellow," answered the unsuspecting Herbert, "how can I be angry with you? of course, you were quite right; but, nevertheless, I cannot but feel hurt at my father's evident want of confidence."

"Undoubtedly; and I should feel as you do," replied Alfred; "and indeed nothing should have induced me to accede to my uncle's wishes, had I been aware of his concealing the circumstances from you. By George! I'll resign—I'll take the stewardship forthwith:—for, I cannot bear the idea of sitting in your place; I care not if I offend my uncle, rather than have you imagine that I am acting selfishly or usurping your right."

"Nonsense! Alfred," rejoined Herbert; "I shall not hear of your doing any such

thing: how can it be your fault, if my father chooses to refuse me that degree of confidence which I have done nothing to forfeit?"

"Egad! I should please myself in future, and shew him that his behaviour had been felt. But, come, come, do not look so serious, Berty!" exclaimed Alfred, "it will all end well; he will be in England in the course probably of a month, and then every thing will be set right: do not you though feel rather queer at the idea of being presented to your papa, a fine bouncing baby, twenty-five years of age, and nearly six feet high? What fun it would be to dress you up in a cap, and have you equipped in a frock twenty feet long, which would be about the proportion, and have you carried in by Belzoni, dressed as a Cauchoise nurse!"

"Queer!" rejoined Herbert, "I felt sufficiently nervous before; but since what I have just learned, when I recollect the sternness and severity of my father's character, the coldness of his disposition, and the certainty there

appears to be of his being unjustly prejudiced against me, surely I have no cause to look with pleasure for his arrival. Then, too, when I remember my attachment to Emily, who is perhaps the only woman in England with whom I ought not to have fallen in love; the daughter, or *protegée*, of the only man in the world for whom my father appears to have entertained a decided enmity, and whom my mother fears he will never consent to my marrying; when I consider that Emily's happiness as well as my own is dependant upon his will, and that I have not a *sous* of my own—"

"I understand Miss Manby has between two and three thousand a-year," observed Alfred.

"True," rejoined the other, "and Heaven knows I do not covet fortune! but even if I were disposed to fly in my father's face, and marry her without his consent, yet I am convinced Emily never would agree to such a measure; you cannot therefore be surprised

if my heart misgives me, and I confess I really tremble at the thoughts of seeing him. Egad! I believe I am not half the man I was since my adventure at Lisbon; I often fancy I feel the cursed rope tightening round me, and I have always the presentiment of some horrid misfortune happening. For myself I care not, but the idea of being the cause of misery to Emily is insupportable."

Herbert would have continued much longer in the same melancholy strain, had not Alfred (who with his pencil on his lip, and the red-book in his hand, had been making some alteration in his intended bets) now interrupted him with "Come, come, my dear Berty, forget for a while all your nonsensical presentiments; I'll bet you a brace of *rouleaus* that you carry off the Manby whenever you please, and that the governor relents, and blesses you both; and that in less than six months we shall have *Noce et Festin, Salon à cent couverts*;—in the mean time, *Ride si sapis*, which, by-the-bye, the Hounslow postboys

translated by, 'ride inside if it rains,' and tell me what you think of Froth's colt for the Claret."

"Claret!" replied his cousin; "why, my dear Alfred, as we happened to be talking about my father, between whom and a race there is as much analogy as between a pot of Whitbread's heavy and a bottle of Lafitte, I must say I have not made up my mind."

"Very true, my dear fellow," answered Alfred, "but, rely upon it, the colt will win, nothing can prevent it: my man has watched the trials; he was hid in the 'winnies,' and says the colt may give two stone to any of them."

"I' faith, Alfred, you have knocked all pleasure out of my head, since you have proved my father's having conceived so great a portion of mistrust for me, though I am satisfied it can only have been produced through the agency of some secret enemy."

"Well, wait until he arrives, and in the mean time drive these sombre thoughts from

your brain. Will he not allow his own senses to convince him, in despite of the calumnies of the person, whoever it may be, who is trying to ruin us both? and, between ourselves, I should not be surprised, if it was that old hypocrite, Mops, your father's solicitor."

"I would batter him within an inch of his pettifogging existence, if I could find it out," replied Herbert. "I never believed him to be an honest man, and I wonder how my father came to employ him. The fellow always looks at me as if he would cut my throat, though he invites me so often to his overdone dinners and vulgar parties."

"Well, never mind him, you have sufficient power to win over a dozen fathers. Are you not the cited model for all young men, a mixed paragon of beauty, courage, and modesty? are not half the mammas in town in love with you for your prospects, and their daughters mad about your interesting looks and your Lisbon adventure? and are not you and your dog invited out to dinner like the

Persian Ambassador and his Memendahr; whilst guardians and fathers point the finger as you pass, and exclaim to their scapegrace wards and sons, 'There goes good Herbert Milton!'

"A truce, Alfred, to your banter! the subject is more serious than you are aware of. I well know the firmness of my father's character, and that when once he has adopted a resolution on due consideration, you might as well try to arrest the Falls of Niagara; and I can already imagine his fury when first I mention to him Emily's name."

"And what objection can he have against her?" retorted Alfred. "But pray cease to peck your gentle bosom, my *carissimo fenice*, and, by way of a change, let us think of the Meeting. We shall have every body there. How stands your book? let me see it, perhaps I can give you some hints; but no more of these gloomy looks."

"Well, Alfred," returned the other, "I will put as good a countenance as I can on the

matter, though, to be honest, I am not such an epicurean as you are ; I cannot make my face look as light as a summer sun-beam, when my heart is as heavy as unleavened bread."

"Well, then, take a sip of this Dantzic to moisten your crust, it will give you courage," rejoined Alfred, taking a small flask of "*Golt Wasser*" from the pocket of the carriage.

"It is not," said Herbert, "for myself, so much as for Emily—"

"For God's sake!" exclaimed Alfred, interrupting him, "forget for a short time your eternal Emily ; you are to meet when we return to town ; and therefore consider, my good fellow, that I am not in love ; so no more of the Manby filly, but let us think of the Diadem colt."

"He is first favourite, is he not, for the thousand guinea stakes?" answered Herbert : "I have ventured, however, to bet against him."

"Then take my word, and bet on him; you must hedge off that."

"Oh, I do not much care; it is only a few pounds, and he may not win; he may be amiss, or something."

"Amiss!" said Alfred, staring at his cousin, "why how the devil did you find that out?"

"Find what out?" answered the other; "I know nothing about him, only these things do happen now and then."

"Come, come, Berty, that won't do," rejoined Alfred, laughing; "confess you are in the secret."

"Upon my word, I am not!" said Herbert.

"Well, then," replied his cousin, "if you will promise me to keep it, and not mention Emily's name again to-day, I will let you into a good thing."

"I think you may trust me," answered Herbert; "but as for Emily—"

"What, again!" exclaimed Alfred; "repeat the dose and I am *bouche* close."

“Harkye! the Diadem colt is first favourite at odds, and Rapid cannot get any money on the race; so there is to be a screw.”

“Why they’re not going to play any tricks with him to make him lose, are they?” demanded Herbert.

“Oh, no: but I had a letter this morning, before we started, from the training-groom, who has let me into the plot, and whether it succeeds or not, the horse must win; he never was more sound in his lifetime.”

“Well, then, what is to be done?” demanded Herbert.

“Simply this—you dine with Rapid to-day, do you not?” replied Alfred.

“Yes, and so do you, I understand,” answered Herbert.

“Well, then, after dinner you will see his groom come in, and declare the colt to be amiss, though he is as sound as a tree: the party will break up almost immediately—the odds will change directly—the report of the Diadem being ‘not right,’ will be all over

Newmarket in a couple of hours—Rapid's agents take all the odds they can against him—an express carries the intelligence to London—the legs will bite, and all those who are fools enough to alter their books will be thrown over. The horse starts—wins of course !”

Herbert, who had listened with considerable impatience and surprise to the narration of this very honourable scheme, now exclaimed, “Surely, Alfred, you will not take advantage of this nefarious trick ! I have heard of a good deal of manœuvring on the turf, but this exceeds every idea I had formed of racing roguery. Is it possible that a man, styling himself a gentleman, can have planned such a deception ?”

“Why, I declare, my good fellow,” rejoined Alfred, “you are much too good to live in such a wicked world as this. Why, Love, Herbert, has turned your head into a conventicle,—where have your eyes and ears been, that you are thus ignorant that tricks

of this kind are mere every-day occurrences on the turf—at least, among the initiated.”

“ But surely, Alfred, there is no occasion for your taking advantage of a plan which you yourself must condemn ? ”

“ What is the use of being honest on such occasions, Herbert ? ” demanded Alfred : “ for instance, where should I have been to-morrow morning, if Jack Bates had not let me into the hoax ? why, I should have been bit among the first, and severely too, I promise you ; and in fact, if I do not take advantage of the thing, somebody else may ; so prithee, Herbert, no more sermons, or, by George ! you shall mount the Duke’s stand, between the races, and give a specimen of your lectures to the grooms, jockeys, and legs. I declare, Herbert, when you die, I will have both our busts carved by Chantry, and placed over our family tomb ;—yours with the line, ‘ Too good to stay on earth, the best are ta’en away ; ’—and under mine, ‘ The worst are left, too bad to take away. ’ ”

“Why, Alfred, you must excuse my ignorance,” rejoined Herbert; “I know so little of these matters; but it really does look odd, to say the least of it, to a novice.”

“Well, all I ask is, keep your countenance at dinner, and my secret afterwards: you may accept all the odds at the rooms to-night, they will not suspect you as a green one, and will, I dare say, accommodate you to any amount.”

Their conversation was here interrupted by their arrival on the Heath, where Alfred's groom with his master's cob and spy-glass, and a pony for Herbert, was in waiting. Springing from the carriage, the two young men were on horseback in a moment, and immediately galloped off to join the parties which were already assembling. “How do, Alfred?” “Ah! what! you at Newmarket, Herbert?” was echoed from fifty mouths, as the cousins drew near the scene of action. The former approached, on the head of his nag, as close as possible into one of the circles

formed round the principal betting-men, where he forthwith offered, accepted, and booked a variety of bets, and then left them to join one of the trainers on a distant part of the Heath, where, with one hand leaning on the mane of the scrambling bit of blood on which the man was mounted, and the other busied in the pocket of his own great coat, whilst the reins of his snaffle hung loose on the neck of his cob, he continued for some time in deep and earnest conversation, with a countenance as serious as if the fate of Europe depended on the opinion of the red-nosed oracle whom he was consulting. In the mean time, Herbert, who had only betted a trifling sum, sufficient to excite some interest on each race, was highly amused by the novelty of a scene so different from any thing he had witnessed at Epsom, Ascot, or any other provincial Races which he had attended.

Drawing close to the side of the circle where all the business was carrying on, and where the destinies of thousands were decided

upon in a few seconds, he heard the various 'high priests of the betting book' uttering their oracular offers. "Three to one against the Martin colt!" "I take it." "Done! Hundreds of course?" "A thousand to four hundred against the favourite for the twenty-five guinea stakes!"—"Ail take faive to fore Diadem don't win the thousand guinea stakes!"—"Done, my Lord! hundreds:"—"Aid rather make it thousands, aif eets all the saime to you."—"Done!" "Very well, I'll book it. Will your Lordship bett any thing on the sweepstakes?"—"Ai don't laik the odds as they stand; gaive me another paynt, and ail taik the mare."—"Seven to four! I can give you no more."—"Vairy good, aim content!" drauled out his Lordship, with the nasal twang of a parish clerk.

"Forty to ten, Velluti does not start for the produce!"—"Seven to two the Duke does not win the plate!"—"Another point, and I'll take it."—"Done!"—"Ponies?"—"Rouleaux, if you please!"—"Good, book

it."—"Twenty to three against Toper, for the Claret!"—"The sister to Brocard's amiss!"—"Pantaloon broke his knee coming home from his sweat;" and so on, *ad infinitum*, as the different legs or sportsmen speculated on their information or real knowledge of the different horses engaged in this and subsequent meetings.

Here were none of those long files of splendid equipages filled with beautiful and joyous countenances, utterly indifferent to the issue of the Races. Here were none of those gay beaux, with their hands resting on the carriage doors, offering harmless bets of a dozen of Houbegon's best gloves against silken watch cord, carving out half-crown lotteries, or desiring the fair speculators to make the choice of three favourites, and taking to themselves some horse already drawn. Here were no symptoms of love,—all was Mammon. Here were no squadrons of plebeian vehicles crammed with dense masses of cider-drinking, ham-devouring rustics. Here were no exhi-

bitions of the hereditary pride and grandeur of country gentlemen's "turns out;" no rivalry of new bonnets and spencers; no explosions of ginger-beer and bottled porter; no screams of "now blue jacket! now whitecap!" "I'll have the striped one for a rump and a dozen, against the one with the red nose!" Here all was eager and earnest business. The few equipages which were on the ground belonged to half-a-dozen neighbouring peers or gentry, who had parties at their houses, or who merely came from town for the occasion; whilst the fair inmates of these unostentatious vehicles appeared as curious and as much absorbed in the business of the day, as their relatives on their cobs. Knots of speculators, with anxiety and seriousness depicted in their countenances, might be seen at various points. Here was a trainer with his gouty shoe and blue-bottle nose, the result of good living, in earnest and secluded conversation with his employer. Here two or three confederates were lecturing their jockey. There might be

seen the noble owner of some extensive stud, whose parliamentary or official duties allowed him little time to enter into the details of his racing establishment, receiving the report of his stables from the gentleman groom appointed to superintend the conduct of the trainers, jockeys, and grooms, and upon whose science or tact depends the success of the stable, much more than upon the speed of the noble animals under his care.

There might be observed a parcel of dwarfish stable urchins, with roguish looks, a bottle of water, a suit of horse-clothing, and a saddle, in readiness to give an impertinent answer to any question addressed to them. On various and distant parts of the Heath, some of the beautiful animals, on whose efforts the sports of the day depended, might be seen wrapped up in their clothing, singly or in pairs, and accompanied by two or three attendants, endeavouring with mysterious caution to avoid the public gaze, and answering with a laconic "I don't know," in reply

to the usual "What horse is that?" of some ignorant spectator. There a jockey, mounted on a broken-down thorough-bred hack, or rough pony, with his thin leathers, wafer-thick boots, rough great coat, and light saddle slung round his loins, might be seen approaching the weighing-house, his nose and his nag being the only indications of there being any blood in the veins of either.

Here were none of those delays incidental to other races—precision and punctuality to a moment. No sooner had the signal for starting for each race been given, than the cry of "They are off!" was heard; and almost before Herbert could tell in which direction, or which of the numerous courses they were running, the horses were already at the bushes, and in a second or two more, the murmur of "The Duke has lost!" or "the Marquis has won!" announced that thousands of pounds had already changed proprietors. As soon as the sports of the day were at an end, the cousins repaired to the lodging provided for

them in the town, and then proceeded to fulfil their engagements with Mr. Rapid, the owner of the Diadem colt. The party entirely consisting of sporting-men, with the exception of Herbert and one or two foreign noblemen, who had come down to make purchases for their studs in Mecklenburg or Holstein, and as the conversation ran on no other topic than the events of the day, and the probable results of the remainder of the Meeting, it would afford little interest to the non-readers of the Sporting Magazine or Racing Calendar. The colt was, however, the general theme of praise and speculation: the certainty of its winning appeared placed beyond a doubt; and in proportion as the host's old port and claret went down, his young horse rose. Indeed, before a dozen of Lafitte had been despatched, the odds in his favour had risen to plenty of bettors, but no takers. Before the evening was far advanced, or even the time arrived for the party to adjourn to the Rooms, the event for which Herbert had been prepared took place.

The butler came in with a grave face, and whispered in his master's ear, loud enough for every one to hear, "Bolter, Sir, wishes to see you directly: he says he wants to speak to you alone."

"Alone! Nonsense!" was Mr. Rapid's reply. "Some of his old humbug: if he has any thing to say, let him come in." And then, as the butler retired from the room to deliver the message, Mr. Rapid exclaimed, "There never was such a tiresome fellow as Bolter: he plagues my life out, about nonsensical trifles; and if I were to believe him, there is not a horse in my stable worth twopence."

Mr. Bolter was now announced.

"Well, Bolter!" exclaimed the host; "what is the matter now?"

"Nothing, Sir, nothing; only I want to speak a word to you alone," answered the trainer, with a face of as much sorrow and gravity, as if he had lost his place.

"Alone! nonsense! if you have any thing

to say, speak out, we are all friends here; we are all in the same boat; so out with it."

"Well, Sir," answered the man, casting a suspicious look round the room, and hesitating, "the colt arn't right, he's amiss; he is, by G—, Sir!"

"*Amiss!*" exclaimed Mr. Rapid, with a look and voice of consternation: and then, after throwing down a bumper of claret—"Amiss, Bolter! I don't believe a word of it: that is always your way,—you have played me this trick twenty times. I don't believe it, it can't be!"

"Well, Sir," replied the man, "it's my duty to tell you what I thinks; and if that don't suit you, Sir, you had better look out for somebody else to manage the stable."

"I don't want any of your remarks, Mr. Bolter," rejoined the master; "therefore, pray leave the room, and we'll settle the matter to-morrow."

"Hugh!" grunted out the man, with well-feigned sulkiness, as he left the room;

“Don't hedge, that's all; I wouldn't have a penny on it!”

It was evident, in despite of Mr. Rapid's attempts to tranquillize his guests, who were all deeply engaged on the colt, that the plan had taken full effect; and indeed, although Herbert was aware of it, it was so admirably acted, that he could scarcely believe it to be a trick. In a few minutes there was a general cry of “No more claret! no more, no more!”—and in fact, without waiting for coffee, the whole party simultaneously broke up. Whilst the cry for hats and great coats was intermingled with exclamations and execrations of, “D—n that fool Rapid, for being so certain!”—“I'm well in for eight thousand!”—“Too late to hedge!”—“I'll never back another horse of his as long as I live!” and so forth. Leaving Rapid, who appeared lost in well-feigned anger and disappointment, to enjoy his joke, Herbert adjourned with the two foreigners to the Rooms, where, before they arrived, the intelligence of the colt's being

amiss was already the topic of discussion, and more than one express was sent off to London to announce the event.

As Herbert proceeded to his destination with the two Barons, who understood little English, one of them, who had expressed considerable astonishment and curiosity in his countenance at the sudden breaking up of the party, but had hitherto refrained from making any observation, now ventured to remark, with a thorough German accent:—

“*Je n'aurois bas gru, Monzieur le Golonet, qu' une pareille jose zeroit arrifée à Néumar-kete, ah sche me zouis pien drompé.*”

“*Comment trompé? Monsieur le Baron,*” replied Herbert, who imagined that his companion had discovered Rapid's plan.

“*Ah, mon scher,*” answered the other, “*sche me zouis drompé sur fotre garaktère nazionale, sur fotre kallenterie Ankloise.*”

“*Eh, pourquoi donc, Monsieur?*” replied Herbert.

“*Ah, mong Tieu,*” rejoined the stranger,

“sche ne me zerois chamais imachiné que tous zes Messieurs ze zeroient deranchés avec tang d’empressement de leur pouteille pour une tame, fût-elle la plus pelle tu monte.”

Herbert, who was now relieved from his fears for the honour of his countrymen, was, however, still unable to comprehend the drift of the Baron’s remarks: he therefore observed that he was extremely glad that a circumstance should have arisen during the course of the evening to diminish the Baron’s unfavourable sentiments of our national gallantry, “which,” said Herbert, “I fear you have imbibed from the writings of those very worthy and enlightened individuals, Messrs. Pillet and Foy, or perhaps from the luminous publication of your own countryman, the Baron de Duken.”

“Commeng donk, Golonel,” rejoined the other, *“ne ze zont-ils pas tous eclipsés ccomme les Eglaires, zitot que le toместique fenoit pour parler de cette temoiselle.”*

“Demoiselle!” said Herbert, *“ah, j’y suis!”*

and then, though he could scarcely refrain from laughing at the absurd *qui pro quo*, which the Baron's ignorance of our sporting language had given rise to, he briefly explained the cause of the confusion to have proceeded from a lame horse, and not from a fair lady. By the time they arrived at the Rooms the whist parties were forming; and, as soon as he entered, Herbert sat down with Lord Dossington, Mr. Muddeford, and a Mr. Mercey, the two first superior players, but the latter, if any thing, unequal to Herbert, who was considered at the Clubs to play a fair game. It fell to Herbert's lot to sit opposite Mercey, of all the men in England the most disagreeable, either as partner at whist, or a companion elsewhere. His ill-humour and cross countenance, small blinking eyes, and sarcastic grin, were the very prototypes of his disposition; he was proverbial for his ill temper, and had never been convicted of saying a kind thing in his life, or of employing the grating organ of speech, with which

Nature had furnished him, for any other purpose but that of snarling and growling like a crabbed mastiff when you approach its kennel. He had a happy knack too of appropriating to himself the witticisms of others, which he re-issued, robbed of half their point, but impregnated with a double portion of gall. When hunting, shooting, at cards, or at dinner, he was alike dissatisfied. If in a *battue* he missed his bird, he would immediately lay the blame on his neighbour for taking his shot, though their respective guns were pointed in different directions. If he fell at a leap, he would vent his rage on some young one for riding against him, though, in fact, they had been separated by a field. Having on one occasion been accidentally rubbed by the nose of another gentleman's horse, he turned round first to reconnoitre his man, and upon perceiving that it was a stranger, and apparently "nobody," he exclaimed, "I do not know who you are, Sir, but I really must take the liberty of telling you that you should not

come out with the hounds until you have learned to ride; especially, my good Sir, your mounting a cart-horse in a snaffle, may do very well for provincial hunting, but it will not answer here."

"I'll tell you who I am, by Jasus!" first answered the gentleman, "and then I'll tell you what you are after. My name is General O'Lion, and you are not only the ugliest little man I ever saw, but, by Jasus! you are the most impertinent one to boot; and you will do well to ride your own thorough-bred tongue with a curb, or you'll find some day it will run away with you, and you'll be in at the death before you expect it!" And slipping his card into Mr. Mercey's hand, the General cantered on, leaving the former looking not a little surprised and abashed, whilst a roar of laughter broke out from the by-standers.

At dinner Mercey would watch the moment of his host's eye being directed towards him, and if he knew that the latter piqued himself on his cook or cellar, he would either put

“ salt in his soup,” send the best and most *recherché plât* away untouched, call for cayenne or some artificial sauce to add to the most piquant *españole*, and whisper to his neighbour that the most delicious *salmi aux truffes* was as mawkish as hydromel, not forgetting to make hints and inuendos that the wine was all corked. At whist, O ye heavens! if the luckless partner did not discover his game before a card was played, or, above all, hold good ones, his ill-humour was vented by every word or look that bile and ugliness could suggest. In the course of two or three deals, Herbert trumped second, having the point and game certain in his hand, and saw his partner's gray brows raised nearly off his scalp, and his red twinkling eyes extended as far as they were susceptible of opening, whilst a suppressed groan or grumble gurgled in his throat. Presently the same thing again occurred, Mercey's best card failing—here the start from the chair and the loud “ God bless you !” (accompanied with a grin which decid-

edly proclaimed any other wish than that conveyed by the benevolent exclamation) was enough to have made any timid man revoke; and no sooner was the game at an end, though they won the rubber, than all Hoyle steeped in wormwood was poured upon him. "Good God, Sir! what could you be thinking of? We are indeed well out of that scrape, and you may thank *me* for landing you. I must do you the justice to say, you did all you could to lose it. If you had played any other card in your hand except the club—why not have given me a spade? Why not pass the heart, which would have forced your adversary, and then I should have overtrumped? What could have possessed you to play the four of diamonds, when you had the three in your hand? to mislead me, I suppose: and then, good God! trumping second hand, when you might have thrown away a small club! Why, upon my honour, it's giving away the game! Then, gracious powers! your playing

the ace before the king—it's really throwing away one's money! Upon my word, you ought not to play at cards—you'll excuse me, but it is not whist—it's patience!"

"Of which," replied Herbert, "you are particularly fortunate in possessing so large a share; and I really hardly know which to admire most, your accurate memory, or the good-humour with which you support winning a rubber of seven."

"*Detur meliori!*" said Lord Dossington to himself; and then aloud, "Come, Mercey, you are so very pleasant, will you not cut in again? I never saw you half so amusing."

However, he made no reply, but walked off into a corner, where he continued for the rest of the evening to sulk over the "Racing Calendar."

The meeting passed off with considerable satisfaction to Herbert, and still more profit to Alfred, who succeeded beyond his expectations in winning some large sums on the

Diadem. Mr. Rapid declared the colt should be brought to the post at any rate, and that, for his part, he did not believe a word about his being wrong. He vowed he never would hear of the horse paying forfeit, and although he were to lose a million himself by the result, the colt should start, and win if possible. He was of course much praised for these sentiments, and as the Diadem appeared to win his race with difficulty by a head, even the losers congratulated Rapid on the issue, and the winners extolled him to the skies, as the most honourable man on the turf.

No sooner were the sports of the week at an end, than the two cousins left Newmarket to the care of the trainers and stablemen, and proceeded to pass a night on their way to town at Alderney Hall, the seat of the Earl of Alderney; where they found Lord and Lady Dossington and their daughters, the Ladies Bossville, Sir James and Lady Maria Epsom, Lord Dumheight, Sir Henry Sneer-

well, Colonel Hoaksworth, Mr. Muddiford, and two or three other persons of note in the gay world, for a description of whom we must refer our readers to the subsequent chapter.

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